Souveräne Historia Jaeger und Eren Jaeger Die Usurpatoren

by Ultunaidis

Summary

Eren und Historia gemeinsam haben eine Verbindung mit der Wahrheit hinter der Welt und den verschiedenen Wegen, die sie nahmen, über die Zeit bis hin zu Erinnerungen von verschiedenen Zeiten, die ihnen offenbart wurden, mit der wartenden Zukunft. Eren und Historia streben danach, ihre bevorstehende Schicksalsentscheidung und etwas, das über ihren getroffenen Weg hinausgeht, gegen den menschlichen Ertrag zu verhindern.

Betrachtet als langsam aufgebaut, canon basierender AU.

Note on Spoilers inside.

Notes

Disclaimer: Ich habe Attack on Titan nicht. Es gehört dem Erfinder Hajime Isayama.

/ EreHisu Discord Invite: https://discord.gg/csQFFUC

/ So... erstmalig versucht hier nach einigen Ermahnungen von verschiedenen großen Personen aus dem ganzen Land, zu dir, danke für deine Ermahnung!
Season 3 has started, and although it's set itself on the right tracks again... SERIOUSLY THEY GOT RID OF THE WINDOW SCENE! That was literally the start of everything EreHisu with the light/shading and the tree leaves stolen from the tree by the winds, in the sunset and just argh! Wit Studio I beg you, do not downplay Erehisu, just please? But really, some of the fanwork I have read/seen inspired on that moment is just beautiful! Just... uh... why... why, that was such an important moment. So with that, I in essence decided to give EreHisu a go especially considering the point the manga is at right now!

TIMELINE: Just to make things clear, seasons 1/2 cover the story so far pretty much exactly and events which occur differently from the anime will be introduced by the memories of the characters. The story will take elements from both the anime version of seasons 3 and onwards (likely at least) and the manga equivalent chapters and so in essence its an AU that comes into effect from the Uprising Arc onwards... if that makes sense? To summarise quickly instead of being taken into Trost like in season 3 episode 1, Eren and Historia have been put in their rendezvous safehouse so they are not at risk in Trost while the rest of the Levi Squad follows the kidnappers who took Armin and Jean in disguise. Eren and Historia have had their conversation from the manga version just before (which I will replay fully later on in a future chapter anyway!) But yeah, this starts at basically ~ 1/2 hour after their first (well 2nd in the manga) proper conversation.

NOTE ON SPOILERS: Given that I'd imagine (hope) that a few more anime-onlies might get into this ship, I'll recount any manga events not covered once the anime progresses so that I don't spoil anything right now for anime-onlies. You will not be spoiled for season 3 provided that you are up to date with the anime. Also... it was only after I had written everything that I then realise the last section is manga only... damn. But yeah... I have separated the section away so you won't get spoiled so do not read past that unless you are up to date with the manga or just wanna risk it anyway (not that I recommend it!) - not that you will be able to understand everything if you haven't but it will result in spoilers for season 4.

The last part was supposed to be an ending scene of sorts and it wasn't supposed to be this long either, and I promise at least they won't be in the future! The ending scene doesn't impact the present storyline only builds on it for the future chapters a while later on, but yeah that's that!

"speech"

'thoughts' - Italics
Chapter 1 - Ursprung

"One hour left before sunset..."

"You're just normal. Just a normal girl who is absurdly honest."

'...'

"There's something I like about you now."

'But Krista... Krista, not Historia. is a girl who everyone likes... But you... Why?'

"It felt like you always had a forced expression on your face. It was unnatural. A little creepy honestly."

'But... Everyone else thought... Except you two... No... It was ...

"No. I totally understand."

'It was just you..."

"So... What do you want to do?"

'Is this... Is this how I might come to understand myself? No... I don't know... I don't know what I want to do, and that's why I envy you... Ymir, she understood Historia. She helped me understand who I am... Didn't she?'

"I'm sorry I failed."

'But she chose her path. A path different from mine, her path. The same path I had just began to walk with her... Because... We were the same... So going down the same path beside her would have allowed me to continue understanding myself even if I couldn't see where the path went itself... Didn't it? That was... Who I — '

" — A dream I once had. It was like it went on forever. It's gone now... What was it about?"

'That happens to me a lot as well. I feel like I had an important dream... but I can't remember a thing about it...'

"Whose memories are these?"

'Huh? Wh—"

"See you later, Eren..."
she realised she was now staring outside the window into the orange tinted skies. A feeling of déjà vu at the scene threatened to overwhelm her as she let herself be absorbed into her surroundings. She looked back around the room. An empty wooden chair in front of her, an empty bed adjacent to it, an empty room of partially refined construction. Empty, just like the girl.

Historia had always been empty. From the day she was born, to the day Krista was born, Historia had remained empty. From the day Krista lived to the day she died, Historia had been empty. But when Krista died, Historia was reborn. But she had found someone that could guide her. So she followed her. She followed the nameless woman who kept hold of a name forced onto her. She followed Ymir, believing she could guide her. Krista and the Ymir that deceived herself had been the same by nature. So Historia thought she could follow the real Ymir to a place where she no longer felt empty. But Ymir left her, and Historia was empty again.

She was empty and she was lost. She felt an uncomfortable sensation on her cheeks and moved to wipe away her tears before anyone came back. 'Why...am I... oh that's right,' Historia came to a realisation. It wasn't that she was crying because she was still empty after Ymir left. She had accepted Ymir's decision since then. Ymir had decided to leave her, following her own advice which Historia had thrown back at her in that battle. Ymir made her own choice and Historia had come to accept the emptiness she was left with. But — 'Did we... was that scene just something my imagination made up to comfort Historia...'

The words which reverberated within her. Telling her to discover for herself who she is. To climb out of the emptiness by her own way, not relying on anyone else to tell her what to do. 'Was that even real?' She embraced herself and looked around again. The room was just as empty and the scene seemed to match what her memories told her. Except that Eren wasn't there, and the scene only felt more of a fabrication than before.

She leaned down on the table again but this time crossed her arms around her head hiding her face. She lightly banged her head against the table as her tears subsided. She made sure there was no sign of tears before remembering that she was alone. She focuses on the wind, listening how it beat the window lightly and emitted an incredibly gentle howl. It was better than being left in emptiness, but not exactly a soothing companion either. So the wind continued as the water dried.

"Hey you alright?" Eren walked in on her with an inquisitive look. She shot up to face him again. He had silently entered through the door. The door had been left open all the while since she awoke back from her nap just moments ago, yet she had not been able to notice or consider it when faced with the emptiness around her.

"...Eren?"

Historia looked almost disbelievingly at him as if she was unable to tell whether he was real or a dream.

"Yeah, that's me," he said, flashing a good-natured smile, he continued walking over to her. "You sure fell asleep again quickly."

"Yeah... um, how long was I asleep for...?" she questioned hesitantly.

She regained her thoughts and receded back to her empty shell. An almost empty shell. Historia was unable to return to her emptiness self who had existed only that morning. She didn't want to. She wanted to hold onto the words to which she had resounded within to.

"Not long. Anyway, here." He handed her the wooden bowl and placed it on the table. Field rations were still the typical source of nourishment as qualified soldiers, however with Levi Ackerman as
the captain of their squad, the food was of far better quality as well as treatment throughout the regiment. Cadets in their trainee days were put on rotational kitchen duty and so they had all been forced to learn how to cook, with varying degrees of skill amongst all of them. From personal experience in the past, Historia knew that Eren's cooking while not being excellent, was above average and found that she had no complaints at the appetising appearance of the broth.

She stared at it. 'Should I be saying thank you? That's something Krista did — everyday.' Eren had moved to the bed already again before she could offer any reply. He laid back in the bed and stretched himself out, staring at the ceiling. She turned to the food in front of her and picked up the wooden spoon and took a mouthful. 'Ach, it's still hot...' She realised that Eren had gone out of his way to take his time to start a fire and heat it up for her properly.

She dropped her hand down hard, causing the table to shake, and her companion to look at her. 'What am I, ah just ask him... I have to ask him... I have to.' Historia resolved herself and faced him, and the path in front of her.

"That... conversation, the one we had, by the window. That... That was real... Wasn't it!!"

She began panicking. She wanted it to be real. It had to be. The words that told her she was just a normal girl who's just absurdly honest. The words of someone who had judged her without realising that was what she wanted. Someone to tell her what she was worth. Someone to encourage her to do something which she did not she wanted to do. Someone who could show her, how to follow the path for her.

She needed that scene to be real. She needed it, because it was echoing out to her. It was telling her something.

Eren stared at her, having sat back up again. He studied her and tried to work out what she might be trying to get at, finding her question very odd and noticing the tumbling emotions mixed in.

"Yes. If you mean the one we had earlier just before you feel asleep again then yeah. That was real."

Truth. Historia had never heard anything in her life that she could be so sure was the truth than Eren's words then. She calmed herself. Strength seemed to course through her body. A deep and powerful sensation which made her pulsate, making her feel as if those words were keeping her alive.

She heard Eren chuckling. "You seem awfully pleased to hear that when I bored you to sleep with that talk."

"No," she shook her head and straightened herself with certainty, "thank you Eren. What you said cleared my head and... made me feel... just a bit less..."

She got distracted and left her sentence unfinished as she looked outside, uncertain of what to say to him.

"It's sunset..." she commented offhandedly. She remembered now. She hadn't noticed it before but the sky on the horizon had turned red now whereas it had been merely shades of yellow and gold an hour ago. Of course that was real. She had just panicked and feared she dreamed everything because she had not been able to notice the obvious details around her that should have led her to the obvious conclusion. But she hadn't been able to do that. And that was because...

"Yeah that's right." Eren responded as he walked over to the window pushing the chair aside and
stared as the last signs of gold disappeared into the horizon. He leaned away from the window and sat down next to her.

"Are you sure that you're alright?" She only nodded in reply and begin to eat the food which Eren had brought her.

'That's right... What Eren said... I remember... I've avoided everyone and skipped lunch with everyone earlier so he must have left after that... And he left me after saying such words... Just like Ymir... And... Her... Who was she... After that... I...'

"Eren... You said that you've had a dream you couldn't remember before..." She calmly swallowed and made eye contact with him again. Entrapped again in his... nostalgically familiar emerald eyes.

"Yeah that's right. What about it?" Eren said, interested in what the girl in front of him had to say.

"No...nothing..." He gave her a weird look, unsatisfied with her trying to wave away the question.

"Huh?"

"It's just that... I thought the things you said then we're part of it... That's just why I asked if it was real... That's all... they weren't boring at all!" In that moment, instead of pulling up a face of seriousness like Krista would for such an occasion, Historia was able to give her first natural expression of reassurance. Her first genuine act of comradeship.

"Oh right, you know I was only joking right?" He awkwardly scratched his head.

"...oh," she let out a sigh of relief yet felt slightly disappointed that she had no better way to answer him and create an opening to show how genuine she was in her gratitude.

"Aha... Sorry my jokes could use a little work. But in any event, we're going to be fighting alongside each other in the future, so I'm bound to improve right? So long as we got each other's backs... We'll do it. We can... do it" He shrugged half-heartily and assumed a comfortable silence between them. The feeling of camaraderie. He was...

"You're... being really kind... again... so... thank you..." She hesitated upon calling him by such a word. The implication was different from the last time she had called him that. Still, she was hesitant to use such words given how he reacted last time. But... she felt so comforted by Eren's attempts to open up. To properly open up herself. As Historia.

"Perhaps... We are all members of the Scout Regiment and of the same squad, so we have to value each other and work together..." He shrugged it off. He implied that he would treat anyone of his other comrades the same way.

'It's different from being Krista... But, I don't think I understand... We're comrades from the 104th Trainee Corps... So does that mean we should be kind to each other because of that... I don't understand, no Krista was the comrade they had fought alongside together, not Historia. Historia, has no reason to get along with people she has only recen-'"
"Just outside for a bit. You can come with, if you want that is."

"But... the Captain said not to take a step outside of here. We are being hunted by the Military Police after all."

"Well... if they are searching for us around here, then they would have caught wind of this place and come to check it out anyway." He stumbled out a poor excuse clearly off the top of his head, which felt flat on the actual logic behind it. "And, besides, they said if they are not back before sunrise, that we should expect them same time tomorrow before proceeding to our next hideout by the river if they haven't arrived by then. Same if this place is actually found out by the MPs."

Eren stood before her, trying to adopt an easy pose, trying to suggest that there was no harm in it.

"And... if we are caught by the Captain returning late?" Historia replied, raising her right brow inquisitively in curiosity at his carefreeness. 'The captain seems pretty strict... and he's just acting as he likes without fearing any punishments he might get.'

"Well, I'm still going to step outside anyway."

He turned away from her without waiting for a further reply nor bothering to put up another half-hearted excuse.

Historia did not move to follow him. She heard the footsteps disappear as he left, closing the door lightly. She was left alone. Again. She stared back down at the table and decided to continue eating. She was hungry. Much hungrier than she thought, and found herself scraping at the empty bowl in a few moments. She was still hungry.

Historia sighed, and stretched out her arms again, positioned her head on them once more. She didn't know what else to do but didn't understand the point in risking the captain's anger for acting carelessly. 'Perhaps... I might remember what that dream was again if I go to sleep now...' was the line of thought that went through her head.

But she found that she couldn't sleep right now. Eren's words kept her mind solely on contemplating the meaning behind what he said, and refused to allow her any more rest. One and a half weeks have passed since she had last been left alone like that. She could sit there and wait as per her orders. Alone. She also had an alternative. Time was running short in the oncoming days, but Historia knew at least something which she wanted to do right now.

2 years ago...

Early Summer of the Year 848

"Nah, I'm not suited to be a leader. Jean's more suited for the job." Eren took a sip from the cup of the black tea as he considered Marco's words and instantly spoke his mind.

"Jean?! Leave me out then." Eren expressed his disheartened mood.

The older boy chuckled softly, seeing Eren's disappointed expression. "You'll understand someday."

"I wonder about that..." Eren said, leaning onto the rail after taking another sip.

The beverage had cooled down considerably, partly due to the lack of a proper equipment unlike that which the nobles in the interior likely had. There was a kitchen where particular cadets would
each have to prepare the meals for the others however at this time in the morning, no-one was permitted to enter, mainly due to the instructors noticing someone had been entering the stores at night, but had been unable to pick up the trail to Sasha just yet. An assistant instructor would no doubt be patrolling the area so Marco had sneaked in and brought the beverages himself, perhaps as an apology for the predicament their group had ended up in yesterday. That thought combined with the still lukewarm drink made the cold breeze of the morning fade away from Eren's body.

"I wonder what kind of soldiers everyone will become." Following Marco's gaze into the sunrise, likewise wondering when it would be time for him to fight the Titans. Another day to take a one or two steps forward in their training. Or none at all. He smiled gently as the gentle breeze passed through his hair and making him turn to his fellow cadet.

"Hey Marco, you're planning to join the military police along with Jean aren't you?" His smile dropped as he returned his gaze into the horizon where the sunlight was not as glaring.

"Mn, yeah that's right. I know that your dead set on joining the scouts and... you also don't have the best opinion of the MPs." He took another drink of his beverage while Eren scoffed.

"Yeah you could say that... Do you really want the honour of serving the king or something like that so much?" Eren asked him. Feeling that Eren was not going to criticize him like he would with Jean, Marco eased himself and continued staring into the sky.

"Well, more or less. I guess it's just a weight off my shoulders, knowing that my parents to be proud with me following their wishes. They told me that I should just aim to join the military police and just have a better life than they did, but they always assured me that it won't be the end of the road if I can't, so I shouldn't be worrying myself too much. But if I do make it to the MPs, one day I will be able to afford to bring them into the interior just like they always dreamed of. I feel... like that is the true honour of joining the MPs. I guess, all that I really want is for my parents to be proud."

Marco leaned on the rail alongside the unusually emotionless Eren and pondered his next choice of words. Eren had no intention to reprimand him, nor did he have any reason to. He could not accept nor chastise a genuine intention like that even if he didn't agree with him.

"I know that you must have been heartbroken when your mother died." His fellow trainee stiffened next to him but nodded slightly nonetheless to signal Marco to continue. "I'm truly sorry you had to go through that. And I think... it's a pretty noble act itself to join the Survey Corps. But... unfortunately Jean doesn't know what it's like, and he's had things he has had to go through."

"Yeah... I know, but I can't accept someone cowardly like that who just plays the government bastard's game when the walls can one day be destroyed again," Eren said frowning. He rested his head in his hand again as he thought back to what the elders told him, Mikasa and Armin when they were tilling the wastelands after becoming refugees from the fall of wall Maria.

"I think you two could get along really well if you talked to each other about your differences." Marco smiled after he said that.

"Ugh... if he wasn't such an ass then I could at least pay him no mind. Uh, as if, you can wish all you want, but there's no way we could get along," Eren huffed in denial, not being able to picture a world where Jean wasn't being a douche to him. "Hey, Marco..."

Noticing Eren faltering at his words, Marco urged him on. "Yeah?"

"Would you... ever consider joining the Survey Corps?" The last thing his mother would want
would be to join the Survey Corps. She would likely in no way be proud of him in wanting to risk his life even if she were alive now.

"Ah... I don't know... Maybe if... things were different, then maybe."

"Different? How?"

"Well, if perhaps... my parents' circumstances were different, then I guess... I might want to do something which would help humanity more directly..."

Sensing Marco's discomfort, Eren immediately regretted asking such a question. He knew what his answer was going to be before he asked. Marco was always friendly and polite with everyone and so had given him a response which he would accept without confining him by a promise. Marco wanted to join the military police. Eren just wanted... to break free of the walls alongside everyone else who he got along with in the 104th cadet corps. The silence continued for a while and Eren started to feel bad for putting Marco in the spot no matter how much he had hoped Marco might give a sign he might consider it.

"Hey Marco, hey Eren!" chirped the voice of an overly cheerful young blonde. They both jumped and turned towards the unexpected presence behind them, neither noticing her approaching at all until she had climbed the stairs to the sentry tower completely.

"Ah! Krista, how long have you been standing there?!" Marco yelped, managing to not spill the contents of his drink... the same could not be said for Eren. Although he managed to grab hold of the handle before it was too late, half of the drink in the cup had splashed out and over the rail. Thankfully there was nobody below who might have got hit by the falling liquid. He could only dread what would have happened if an instructor had been there.

"Oh! I'm so sorry about that Eren!" The lively and kind-hearted girl squeaked an earnest apology for what she had caused. Too lively and kind-hearted.

"It's alright, Krista. Don't worry about it, there's still some left." Eren was a little annoyed. Not that he had wasted his cup but because he noticed how the girl was behaving.

Krista crept forward on the squeaking wooden boards and turned back to Marco.

"Oh I just got here now." She had been listening in on their conversation for the past couple minutes almost, although at first unintentionally she had ended up eavesdropping on what should have been a relatively private talk while pondering how to make her entrance.

"Aha, looks like we need to be more vigilant when we are on duty," chucked Marco. It was the early morning duty which Eren had been assigned to alone. His period lasted from 4 to 7 in the morning and it was the last of the night watches for that day. There were 5 sentry towers around the training camp and night watch was split into 4 three-hour periods for which 20 cadets were chosen every night. Sentry watching was supposed to be taken seriously even though it didn't count towards their grading, though the only things the cadets had to look out for were the instructors.

Although the cadets had no way to tell the exact time as they could not afford timepieces, the bell would chime at the 3 hour intervals to signal the change. The sun had risen a while ago however Eren estimated that he likely had just over an hour more to go. Messages were sometimes relayed to those on duty in the case of training starting earlier than usual, but beyond that Eren had no clue as to what Krista might be here for.

"Sorry for scaring you guys like that," she made what most would see as a completely genuine
smile. "I just wanted to properly thank you, Eren."

Seeing the direction the conversation was going Marco gave a tender smile and excused himself. "Well, I'll see you guy later."

"Huh? Oh yeah... later Marco." Eren rubbed his hair oddly, uncertain as to what to reply. Marco and Krista shared a nod and a smile respectively as Marco went past and left the two of them alone. Krista had approached both Marco and Jean just before after all three along with several others from their 2 groups had woken up early and gathered to spend time together, restless from the events which had recently transpired. Jean had been left with a slight blush after the encounter with the kind words of the "goddess" Krista as he hurriedly began bragging to Marco on his ODM gear skills a short while before.

"Um yeah, I heard from the rest of our group that when those thieves took me, you were the one that insisted everyone would leave at once to come save me." Resuming her beaming face, Krista initiated the conversation again.

"Oh, yeah," he shrugged uncertain of how to respond to the grateful girl. Uncertain, because of how forced he found the words, as if recited from a memorised script, "well... it's thanks to everyone as well."

She walked over to the rail where Marco had stood moments before. She leaned against the rail and looked into the same direction where Eren and Marco had been gazing. But unlike them, he realised she wasn't looking for something at all. Just staring into space. She turned and made eye contact with him again. He had been staring at her for the whole time, unmoving. Waiting for what the girl in front of him was about to say.

"You're really kind-hearted you know?"

"Huh?" The statement completely caught Eren off guard. He was not used to compliments like that at all. Especially when most people just saw him as a hot-headed kid out for revenge. "Ah, well... it was Armin in the end who saved you really. And Mikasa of course as well."

"I know." Krista rolled her eyes and nodded, resting her head on her right hand she continued "but Armin told me that you were one that convinced Jean and everyone else to follow after me. If you hadn't done that, then you wouldn't have been able to catch up to the gang of thieves. You wouldn't have been able to procure the ODM gear necessary. And you wouldn't have been able to capture the first carriage without your and Jean's skill."

"Ah, well I guess," he returned to his position and went to lean against the rail alongside Krista. Krista had to stretch herself slightly as she leaned, her short pressing against her body and exposing her curves. Eren quickly realised what he was doing and averted his eyes before he was caught. He wasn't like Jean, wanting to satisfy his perverse thoughts mostly directed at Mikasa, no he was captivated by her peculiar behaviour rather than her apparent cuteness which he heard the other cadets bragging about. And so he had unintentionally been staring at her, simply uncertain of how to have a conversation with the odd girl.

"Armin even told me how you had this determined gaze in your eyes. He said that you would never back down when you had that look. He told me how you said you were going to save me even if it was alone. So really thank you, Eren. Truly, you're a really kind-hearted guy who is nice to everybody. Thank you." Her words oozed sweetness. Just about any other person would have accepted them with fondness combined with the angelic smile they would perceive.

"Err, yeah..." Not Eren.
He was met with a soft giggle. The giggle of a gentle young girl who was thanking the person who had saved her yet her saviour was brushing it off as if it was nothing in modest. How could she not giggle. If someone was being modest after risking his life for her, then the sweet Krista had to respond with showing how heartfelt his acts were. And so their eyes met with the girl’s expression meaning to radiate happiness and gratitude. An expression that was meant to receive words of 'you're welcome' as a response.

Eren gave no such response. He made no kind smile. So she stopped giggling. She kept looking at him, expecting some sort of response. Some sort of acknowledgment.

"Is... something wrong?" Krista was puzzled. Uncertain of the inquisitive look she was being given, she tried to tempt him to give her the words of welcome that she was looking for and accustomed to. "Did I... say something wrong."

The silence had started to grow awkward. 'Kind-hearted,' Eren pondered the words she had called him, 'Kind-hearted... a kind-hearted person who is nice to everybody... like you?'

He glared at her. Unable to conceal his emotions, Eren glared at Krista. The unpleasant silence had grown tense. Krista's eyes shot up wide in surprise, not expecting this display of hostility. She stopped leaning and put a hand to her chest as if to protect herself from his glare and took a step back.

"Kind-hearted..." Eren repeated the word that had been constantly echoing through his head, "You're wrong. I'm not kind-hearted in the slightest."

"A-ah well, I mean, that w-was... that was a really kind thing you did back there for me, a-and I know you fight with others and Jean especially but... um, so... I think you're a kind person..." She stammered but regained herself quickly and shifted away from him.

Bloodied knife and cold corpses. He shook the memory from his head. 'No, I don't mean... that.' He realised that he had let his emotions get the better of him for the second time that morning already. He reeled himself in and broke away from her gaze, staring into the sunrise again. Looking forward towards something, unlike the girl next to him who would stare into nothingness. She looked afraid. Not hurt or confused by his words simply scared about something.

"I'm not like you." The girl was trying to relate to him Eren thought. He didn't know why, but he could easily see what she was trying to do through her clearly lying character. She described him by the very words which everyone around the camp would describe her with. "I... did what any other comrade in training should have done. We're all in this together. Our territory had been snatched away by the Titans and it's because of them that we've been forced to enlist in the military to get by with food and shelter to the next day. So... we're in this together. If it were some fat noble sitting on his wealth and possessions or some cowardly field worker who doesn't have the will to fight then I wouldn't bother showing any kindness to someone like that..."

Eren was not someone who was kind to just everybody. A hero or a messiah would be someone who thought about everybody and fit the description of who Krista was trying to portray him to be. He was neither a hero nor a messiah. In the world which they lived in, it was impossible for either to exist. No-one could ever fit that sort of role. No-one like that could ever possibly exist. And he knew, as sure as he's ever been of anything, that the girl next to him... was leading a fake lie.

"... oh..." was all the blonde was able to mutter. Krista had been dumbstruck by the intensity behind his words. This was not what she had expected when coming here. "well... I'm still thankful nonetheless... and... you're still kind to think about your comrades at least..."
“Whatever. You’re welcome I guess... I’d do it again if you or any of our comrades were in danger... but it’s not because I care about everybody... it’s just that... we need to fight against the Titan together...” He finally gave her the words she had been after, despite trying to conceal his bitterness, she noticed an edge it carried. The signal of finality.

Eren was only saying the words she wanted to hear, one of the very few moment in his life so far in which he was not being honest with speaking his mind. But the real message could easily be picked up on through his previous words.

“Well... I will see you at training...” was all she could say. Unable to say anything else, she picked herself up slowly and crept away, feeling she had failed as Krista for the first time since Krista had been created. No, she knew she had failed. For the first time.

She couldn’t bear the silence any longer. But more than that, her thoughts were still shaken. She had thought to get closer to Eren as she was truly grateful. She thought she could become friends with someone who she thought was truly kind. Someone like Krista. Someone she could look up to and copy as she pursued with the only character she could think she could follow. A character from somewhere she could not remember.

A character which she thought Eren might be similar to. A role model. Someone with whom Krista can walk the path alongside to rid her of her loneliness and make her not feel like she was different from everyone else who sought safety and prosperity behind the walls.

But she was wrong. Eren was not like she thought he would be. But... he had still saved her. He had been the first person in all her life who had risked their own life for hers. Many of the trainees were kind to her and would respond with kind things because of how she treated others. But no-one had ever risked their own life for hers until he did. And so she... Krista was grateful. But Historia did not know what to feel. Historia was locked up, suppressed by Krista. If she was Historia then she would have no future. So she had to be Krista.

It was lonely being Krista. It would likely continue being lonely as Krista. But... there could be someone one day who might be the same as Krista. Someone who walked the same path. She couldn't return to being Historia. So Krista held onto that one wish. She would continue down her path just as she was instructed to... until...

“Oh... Eren?” He turned to her. Krista had stopped just before she made her descent and turned back to him.

“Yeah?” He had regained himself and assumed a neutral stance, pushing aside his previous thoughts.

“I'm going to join the Survey Corps as well... just so you know.” He blinked at the small girl's words. There was no determination to join the fight against the Titans and help mankind. None. Eren knew her kindness was fake. An obvious, feeble façade which everyone else seemed unaware of. But he chose not to call her out for it.

“So you were listening in earlier?” he accused her.

She had obviously been listening in for longer than she claimed. Just another lie which Krista had made. She had always chosen the response which had made everyone happy for the past 3 years. Eren knew. So she gave him the response she wanted. A response given with the intention of acting kind. But it was the first honest reply which Krista had made.

“Yes... I'm sorry... I didn't mean to. But I think you are right in choosing the scouts, and that...
guess we'll fight alongside each other one day." Until the day she died. Just as planned. But she was no less scared of the future which faced her.

"I see... why... why do you want..." He halted his words. He already knew the answer the fake girl in front of him would give. She would want to help others for the sake of appearing like a kind-hearted girl. She wouldn't give him the truth as to why she wanted to join the Survey Corps. But... he at least felt she wasn't lying in this moment when she said that she would join alongside him. He changed his words quickly, 'well... I feel you should put all your efforts into training then..."

"Ah, yeah..." He hadn't asked the question she was expecting. It was no mystery to anyone why Eren wanted to join the Survey Corps. But she could not reveal the truth. She had nothing more to say. Aside from trying to clean this encounter. One last shot to clear this mess. "Well... I guess we can train together sometime?"

"Yeah, I guess we can do that..." Eren didn't mind. Perhaps he would learn why the girl was living a fake life. But it wasn't something he was that interested in. Krista offered a parting smile to which Eren turned away. Again. Her kindness had been rejected by this boy. She would not get the response she had expected. So she left. Descending down the stairs of the tower.

Krista continued her path. Searching for someone to join her one day on her path. She found no-one. But she did find a clue on the snowy mountain later. And she found her answer at Utgard castle. Ymir showed her a different path. But Ymir then left. Krista had been destroyed. She became Historia then once again. And she became lost. The only things that have her a semblance of direction was in memories like these. Moments which made Historia happy as well. She remembered how she left him like that.

Eren had been left there alone. He didn't like her. He didn't like her at all. In truth he utterly hated the act she was putting up with. A façade to cover whatever she didn't want to reveal. He hated her. But... he had no reason to pry into her history. It didn't intrigue him all that much. But he always remembered how much he hated Krista.

---

Early Fall of the Year 850 - At the Dawn of Night

"Wuh, er captain! I was ju-" Instead of the stern face of his superior, Eren an apathetic face devoid of emotion. "Oh, it's you... Historia."

She said nothing in reply and simply wandered closer to him, observing what he was doing. Her light footsteps made her go unnoticed until she was close behind him. 'Why is she always sneaking up on me, I swear...'

After looking back at her uncertainly, Eren returned his gaze to the sunset, sitting down on the dry ground with his arms supporting his leaning form from behind. The golden circle in the sky had sunk halfway into the hills to the east. The sky nearer to it still held a red tint which blended into the deeper purple colours and then into the dark night sky overhead.

The scene felt still yet both tender and powerful, unlike the girl. It suited the boy much better, so the girl just stood there, watching the boy and reminiscing as to how out of place she felt. She considered going back in side, but denied the thought instantly.

"Historia, you can sit down you know." Growing slightly uncomfortable with the her staring at him silently, he decided to speak up and try to do something to get rid of the awkward behaviour of the blonde girl. Once more, Historia made no reply but came over close to him and took a spot a foot away from him and began imitating his posture beneath the tree which Eren himself was sitting.
'Damn, I can still feel her looking at me from the corner of her eyes, honestly what she doing just staring at me so intently, it's already been a couple of minutes nonst-' 

"AGH?!" Historia promptly let out a small squeak as her hands slipped and her back fell onto the ground unexpectedly. She had ended up leaning backwards more and more and thus having to keep shuffling her arms backwards to keep them roughly perpendicular to the ground, yet lost in thought and focusing on her companion, she had ended up not paying attention and somehow slipped on a fallen leaf. 

Eren looked at with his eyebrow raised before turning away to hide his smirk and contain his laughter at the clumsiness. 

"The ground was just muddy here! That's all!" Embarrassed by her display she tried to put the blame elsewhere which only resulted in Eren openly chuckling as he examined the ground around her. It hadn't rained for a whole week, although there were signs it would drop any day now, no rain had come yet and the earth was still dry from the lingering summer heat. Upon realising this Historia looked away from her annoying companion and folded her arms, embarrassment boiling up. 

"There's a leaf stuck on your hand," he responded after suppressing his amusement. She jumped at his comment and hurriedly realised that he was right. Peeling it off her, she turned and tried to pin the blame on the leaf this time but she stopped upon seeing the smirk he gave her. 

"You need to be more aware, as a sol—" He stopped his words upon remembering who it was that taught him those exact words. His former amusement subsided and was replaced by cold resentment. Historia watched him as his body buckled up before he calmed himself and looked back at her. He leaned over to her and stretched his hand towards her. 

Before she could question what he was doing, Eren's hand reached into her hair quickly and pulled back, holding another leaf that had fallen into her hair just moment before. Around her, she noticed that many leaves of dark red and brown shade were falling from the tree above them and around the small portion of woods which was composed of seemingly the same sort of tree. The thought of 'Its... Pretty...' carried itself through her head and made her eyes widen in appreciation of what she was seeing. 

And within her, Historia felt something. Seeing the dyed leaves fall from trees in early preparation for the season to come, just like the skin shedding itself of a snake which they had found I their trainee days. She felt something bumbling from within her. A gentle beat which suggested Historia was still alive after ridding herself of Krista. 

"Eren." Her slightly red cheeks still visible, which she internally hoped would be disguised by the scarcely remaining hue of the sunset. 

"Yeah?" He turned his attention to her again. 

"Did you come out here to watch the dying leaves fall?" Instead of asking the question she so longed to ask, she instead decided to ask something that could give her another sign. 

It was peaceful to her. She felt as if it held such importance within her. A sign. This was yet another sign, and she wanted another. 

"No actually, I had no idea it's their time to fall, I mean it's awfully early, Fall has only recently began," he then gestured his head side wards to the East, where the sun had since disappeared yet still left behind an array of colours similar in tone to the colour of the leaves falling around them.
"It's just that, a long time ago, I spent my days just looking up at the sky. And... with everything that's happened recently, I just felt like coming to watch the sky again... just like before it all began on that day..."

'Reiner and Bertholdt... I remember that aside from Mikasa and Armin, he often stuck around them, and Annie... Secrets behind his back... Just like Ymir....' They sat in there, in content silence for a while. Both had eventually relaxed and no longer felt the awkwardness between each other. The leaves were still falling albeit on a much slower rate around them, littering the ground with the same shade it was along with covering the few patches of ground in a contrasting colour. After a while, Eren glanced over to Historia to see that she was gazing upwards.

Up to the sky in which a few stars have revealed their glow to the sky. They sat there, as time passed and more stars began to appear as the night came to seize away the lingering colours of the remaining light from the since departed sun.

"In any case, it seems like the rest of the squad will not be back tonight." Eren got up and dusted himself off the dirt. "This isn't the a good sign but I'm sure with Armin, Mikasa and the Captain there, they can handle it."

"We should probably head back inside now, and take turns keeping watch." Eren said to her and Historia nodded in response but didn't move from her spot where she was kneeling on the spot. "Historia?"

"I'm coming, just..." She gave one last look at the shining lights of the stars and the moon.

'I've made my choice... I'll follow my own path... so please Eren, could you maybe... help me to find my way. I know... It's selfish to just ask for something like that, but I promise I won't be just dependent on you... It's just that you were the first sign so far that made me feel something right... And just now, you have given me yet another sign of that. I don't understand it... I don't understand what I should be doing as Historia... So please, keep showing me signs that make me feel that Historia is doing something right...'

She made her absolute choice. She began to walk that path. Though she still didn't understand who Historia was up to this point, she decided she would embrace her, that she would come to understand Historia with the signs that she was being given and she wanted to make Historia into something more. She could only hope this was the path to such a thing. Maybe she would only lose the sight of Historia she has found so far just like before. But it was the only path presented to Historia's eyes. And she knew, that she'd never know where it goes, unless she continued on it.

So she began to walk that path. The path to —

Welp please give me any feedback on any particular feature you liked/disliked so that I can improve, please point out any grammar/spelling errors or any cringe and it'll help me a lot to get better! Also in case you ask, no it's not an error that the sun is setting in the East... Genuinely not, unless they change it in the anime... Then it might be an error?

Ending Scene: WARNING MANGA SPOILERS - CONTAINS SPOILERS FOR SEASON 4 (OR WHAT WILL BE SEASON 4 AT LEAST)

The wind was quite strong on that day. The messy dark-brown hair of the one legged soldier was swaying in the breezes as his seated form stared ahead onto various wounded men and women struggling to move, talk or see in some cases. Soldiers who have fought in the recent 4 year long
war and returned home to nothing but struggle. Struggling to pick themselves back up and find a reason to keep moving forward. But regaining lost pieces of the body was something that only a few were able to do in this world, and for the rest, they could never regain their past forms. Such was the price of being pushed into hell and managing to crawl back out of it.

The wind was becoming colder. Workers from the hospital were tending to those starting to shiver from the cheap clothing they donned, helping them inside one by one to provide better comfort than what the brick walls could provide. A rectangular wall surrounded the building yet it was not particularly tall and the wind was blowing over and down it into the area that enclosed the hospital building.

The one legged soldier was seated on a bench which rested near to one of the walls and so he could feel much of the oncoming cold. A crutch was nestled in his hands, its wood starting to decay at the corners which held it together. It would only last at most another 2 months. But neither the cold nor the cheap support was of a concern to the black haired man. His shoulder length hair was swayed to his left, causing the bandage, which covered his left eye completely along with the rest of his forehead, become ever more visible to any onlooker.

"Ah! Mr Kruger!"

A young blond boy, around the age of 12, came rushing from the open entrance to the hospital. He slowed down as he came to sit next to the one legged soldier who returned a nod in greeting. Only about half a dozen patients were still around, all except a couple were proceeding inside the hospital doors, seeking shelter from the ever growing cold.

"Falco, any progress so far?" The two had met around 2 weeks ago and first spoke at the very spot they were now.

"Ah, I've yet to close the gab between me and Gabi yet but I feel I've had some growth at least." His military uniform was disheveled from constant exposure to the warrior trainee program, but his wounds were just as numerous as when they first met. "We had the usual drills today of course, but we focused more on marksmanship today. Gabi is of course still the best at it but I am about equal to Udo now."

"I see. I'd imagine today would make things more difficult than usual." The older man spoke as if he was kindly making conversation with a younger child but in truth, he truly was interested in Falco's investments.

"Yes... for me at least... but not so much for Gabi. She's a natural at it all."

The wounded soldier looked up to the clouded sky, remembering similar spoken words from his past. Along with the words of his mentor in this field, but also with his own beliefs.

"My old comrade acted as a mentor to me for marksmanship. Concentration and calmness of mind. Properly maintained equipment. Read the direction of the wind and never fire too early. It's better to forgot about making a shot than to waste a single shot..." The young boy looked up at the older man gazing upwards into the clouds and followed his gaze to a particularly darker spot in the clouds for a moment.

"Yes it's as you say, I just need to focus everything into it. I just need to reach her level by doing just that." The wind started to enter a pattern in which it would suddenly pick up before calming for a moment and then picking up again. The clouds hinted that rain might be on its way.

"Thank you again Mr Kruger, I'll just try again tomorrow and the day after and keep trying. Was...
your mentor talented then?"

A very tall man with a gentle smile and a kind yet timid personality. Somewhat reclusive as well yet the wounded soldier had once appealed to the tall man for help until he accepted to teach him despite his habit of not getting involved.

"Yes... although he certainly had a fair deal of experience as well. But he was certainly talented."

A severed bond that would remain severed just like a missing limb of a battle hardened soldier. The boy looked around the compound again, they were the last two people left now although the hospital doors were yet to close.

"Thank you again, its thanks to your encouragement that I have even gotten partway forwards. It might rain soon, do you want me to help you inside?" Even if the wounded soldier was able to walk with the support, having someone support him inside would surely be easier on him.

"It's fine, thank you Falco. And I can guarantee that the rain won't be falling today. I think... I will stay out here a bit longer." He lifted his left hand in front of him, feeling the strength of the wind blowing to his left. "I wonder how far this might be traveling from?"

"Huh?" He stared at the worn out hand unfazed by the wind. "I'm not certain but... I'm guess the wind must be traveling from a place far away..."

"I see... So in a way, that would mean wind can carry things across the skies. Perhaps this wind might be traveling from one hand to another, perhaps even trying to carry the wishes from one person to another. Wishes of yearning, curses or desires."

The eyes of the young boy felt as if they were alight by the words of the wounded soldier, moved by the feeling of his words and how alive it made him feel.

"Do you... is that what you think you are feeling right now? Someone's wishes right now?" The wounded soldier was so mysterious to the young boy. He felt that he had a long story that would take a lot of time to share. But the young boy felt like he could understand what the words of the older man meant. His family perhaps who he is uncertain of seeing again, or maybe a comrade from his past who the wounded soldier is wishing to feel some sort of reply from.

"Yes... I think I can imagine what she might want to tell me right now..." The older man almost appeared genuinely sorrowful but his voice betrayed nothing.

' "Is that candidate... a girl?" is what he asked immediately at that time... did Mr Kruger... understand what I meant because he has someone he thinks of as well?" thought the young boy as he continued gazing at the older man's unmoved hand, still feeling the wind — searching for a sign.

"The circumstances are very different from yours." Their gazes meet, understanding and empathy. "But like you, I want to keep her safe from a certain fate."

The movements of the clouds had become clearer by their outlines yet they showed no signs of clearing and the sky remained grey. A nurse had just come out from the building and was approaching them at a steady pace.

"It's Mr Kruger, isn't it? We'll be locking the doors soon in a few minutes. It's best to come in side now. Do you require assistance" The nurse bore look of curiosity as to why the man was still out here alone with a young boy in such weather.
"Yes, I understand. Please give me a few more minutes, I feel as if this will help me." The wounded soldier had not revealed that he had lied about his amnesia to the hospital and neither had the young boy told anyone of it.

"Oh, well, I guess then if that's the case, I guess a few more moments won't hurt, but please don't stay out here too long and I'll come back just before we officially close." The somewhat experienced nurse understood that this could certainly help her patient and so retreated back inside, accepting his request in the hope his condition might improve.

The young boy, still sitting next to the older man throughout the exchange with the nurse, had began to feel the effects of the cold. It was likely nearing evening and his brother would want his help in the house later.

"I'm going to get going now. I hope you return to your family... and that she will be safe when you do. I'll see you tomorrow, Mr Kruger." He got up and began his way to the exit.

"Yes... I'll see you tomorrow." The wounded soldier was left alone after he bode farewell to the boy.

Alone in the cold and the wind. Perhaps the wind was carrying a message from her, but the wounded soldier lacked the ability to decipher its exact contents. However... he could sense her feelings even if they were separated by the ocean and the walls. She was probably staring outside from that cabin right now.

Perhaps she was holding her hand and feeling the wind as well right now, appearing as if they were imitating a child. Perhaps it would be just a bit too cold for her and so she would likely soon head inside and sit by the hearth if she was not already.

But she was definitely at least looking out into the horizon for a sign of his return. Wishing for him to return. And her wish was carried by the winds to the wounded soldier. He would return to her soon. But the wind was only blowing on one direction, and so his message could not be carried back to her.

"I promise I will return to you. I know I promised you many things, half of which I have broken. But please wait for me. I'm taking the path to a place where I can no longer break any promises. So please... wait for me." The man spoke to the wind, but the wind did not listen. He was alone. Completely alone right now. The wounded soldier makes an oath clad in unbreakable and ceaseless wind. A lone flame, dimmed yet undefeated by the strength of the wind. Alone but not empty.

"Even if I have to fight a million soldiers and the rest of the world alone for you."

He was not empty like she was back then. But in that moment he was alone.
For anime-onlies, at this point in the timeline, Levi/Co have captured Reeves and his men just like in the anime, except Kenny has not shown up this early and the battle between him and Levi has not happened yet since he was using Reeves and his company knowing that Levi would capture them and use them, since after all Kenny knows how Levi thinks and since his only job is to capture Eren and Historia, he has no need to stick around and kill the SC as in the manga. Levi himself captured Dimo Reeves and negotiated with him since they need to find out who is behind the attacks made on the SC and they have no reason to endanger Eren and Historia by bringing them into Trost and so right now with the Reeves company they are capturing the 2 MPs Sannes and Ralph.

Anyway, this will be a flashback heavy chapter so apologises if the italics make it a lot more difficult to read characters' thoughts, after this chapter and the one after however I can promise that it will stick much more to the present. Also just to reassure you again, the mythology/story in the first section of the chapter is NOT canon, and just an alternative tale more heavily related to norse mythology and another story to build the concepts up but rest assured I have not revealed anything directly which will be revealed in the Basement episodes and there are images on the book which Historia had in episode 3.

"speech"

'thoughts' - in Italics

Chapter 2 - Ginnungagap

6 years ago...

Early Fall of the Year 844

Dreams and Curses...

That was night and day respectively for the girl named after the records of time.

Every night, she would dream of something which she could never remember once the sun dawned and her curse resumed. A curse of servitude bound by her birth. In the day, following the orders of her grandparents she worked the land. Scrapes, bruises and pulled muscles. Sometimes her bones would crack unhealthily, her limbs would become sore and her skin would itch from a mixture of over-exertion, illnesses and her overall lack of strength.

Swells and cuts kept appearing over time when suddenly on some random day from time to time, they would all disappear. Healed by some greater force out of nowhere while Historia was only left with the impression she had forgotten something important.
Just like in her dreams.

When she was 9 years old, Historia had began to take a lot more notice to her constant odd feelings in her mind. Things that felt nostalgic to her yet were undoubtedly new. Things that she inherently felt she knew how to do, despite only been assigned this new task by her grandparents. And things which she felt she knew the answer to despite never considering the question of.

Whenever she wasn't being tormented by the world of drudgery, thrown rocks and weird feelings of the world around her, she would sneak off and read her books in peace. The world in them was so vastly different, and not just in its characters like the parent and their child she would often come across and become intrigued by as always. It all seemed so unbelievable to her. She had never seen such a thing exist in reality...

And so she began to wonder whether it actually did...

There was one book that was much more different from the others. It talked about many different things. Stuff like the names of the types of books such as 'fairy tales' which she learnt she had a lot of. This book, instead of just telling her stories like the others, taught her about what a story actually is. In the fairy tales she read, there would always be a hero who came to save someone, often the heroine who was in danger from something. The hero would then be praised and rewarded for what he had done.

The one book told her that fairy tales did not actually happen. They were a version of a true story changed to suit the interests of those who might read it. Historia didn't fully understand however, since the book didn't tell her what parts of fairy tales were real and which were not, she was left to wonder just that. Did heroes actually exist? Did people who cared for everybody exist? And would she ever meet one?

She wanted to know what it was like. To reward a hero, to be saved by a hero and to be a hero. And if such a thing even existed.

But she had no way to know. She had no clue how to find out something like this. No matter how much she tried to speak to her grandparents about it, she would never receive a reply. There was no point in leaving past the fence if she had no idea of where to go. So she stayed there. Historia stayed, bound within the curse she was born with. And kept reading and re-reading the one book which was special above all the others.

The book first introduced her to a strange story.

There was a being which offered a young girl an apple from a tree which she could not reach. It was a very tall tree which extended out with 9 massive branches which covered the world. The tree stretched from its roots which dug to the deepest crevices of the underground and the tip of its branches covered the farthest reaches of the sky.

Having been captivated by it, over time after reading back over it so often, she was able to recite it.

"The young girl in the story had lived happily with her people. She was treasured by her family and everyone else around her because she was always a good girl who was thinking about everybody else. She was so kind-hearted that even the animals and the earth seemed to grace her presence.

One day however, she was driven out from her home by a far greater enemy than her people, and found herself wandering alone in emptiness. She had become lost after travelling for several days..."
and grew incredibly hungry, but the tree which was at the centre of the world had caught her attention and having nowhere else to go, she began her journey to it. The path to that enormous tree took a very long time to cover, but she was able to get freshwater from a stream which flowed out from seemingly the tree itself. She kept following the river, growing ever more hungry slowly to the point of starvation.

At last however, she was able to reach this tree and saw what appeared to be some fruit on it's branch far up in the sky. It was impossible for the young girl to ever reach it when the lowest branch was already above the clouds. Fortunately however, a cloaked figure took notice and approached the young girl. The young girl was scared at first since the being didn't look human, yet was reassured when it spoke the same tongue as her.

The being asked the young girl why she wanted the fruit which she learnt was called an 'apple'. She replied that she was hungry and since she cared for people so much, she needed the strength to find her people again who had been scattered across the land. The strange being told her she was wrong.

The young girl was not hungry at all.

She was empty.

And she wished for something which might fill the void inside her. She wanted to eat so that she could live. She wanted to live so that she could find something to fill the void inside of her.

The young girl was confused and upset by the words. But she accepted before she even heard them. Because she knew it was true. The cloaked being told her it was only natural for her. It told her how the void inside of her had a name.

It was called Ginnungagap...

The young girl asked the being how she could fill this... Ginnungagap within herself. The being snickered at her and pulled out an apple. It told her that it fell from the great tree a while ago and gave it to her saying she would now the answer once she consumed it.

But... she would have to pay the price for it.

The young girl did not hesitate and agreed she would do anything for it if it was to rid her of the void in her. The being then decided to give her a name. She let go of her past name and took upon herself the same name as that of the land.

She was then given a sign— If — actually — God —

[The words had been scribbled out at the ends of this side though she was able to make out these bits and pieces and the next page had been torn out.]

She was then given yet another sign on what to do. Upon her calling, they decided to create something which would guide her people back together again. They separated the land in which her people once dwelled and created a massive fortress about this land and to keep her people safe.

They called it M — rd.

[One more the words had been scribbled out furiously but she was able to make out some of the}
Others even later called it As— and V — eim. Sometimes by even all three collectively.

Her people gathered over the coming weeks while the young girl decided to make a final request. Her only response was met with a great rumbling which caused the lands to split apart and for water to rise from the ground and flood the lands, separating that place from the rest of the world which humanity roamed.

After everything calmed down, her people undisturbed by the rumbling all arrived to where the young girl was and praised her for acting as the guiding star for them. She was worshipped by some yet envied by others.

Everyone however agreed, that the young girl must be an 'engel' since she had proved once and for all that she cared for all her people and was therefore loved by all.

Because a kind-hearted girl makes everyone happy..."

The title of the story had also been scribbled out, with a furious dark ink which spoke of deep contempt for the name. The book held versions of many story and after each one, there was a long list of comments telling her about the story and what sort it is. Within them, she learnt of how this was simply one version of a particular story. It told her how the story was written to create a 'role model', someone people can aspire to become like and to teach the ideas of morals and priorities.

The book's name, which had weathered away but still remained clear enough to make out, always made her wonder.

It was called 'Historie'.

Her own name bore a fundamentally identical name to this book. She wondered where this book came from, and why one of the people who read it before seemed insulted by the story. She must have found it somewhere amongst the house at some point in her forgotten memory, meaning that it was likely once her mother's.

Perhaps... perhaps she just thought that this might have been how her mother expressed her affection for her, however small. She had tried hugging her mother today which failed. Perhaps if she showed her this book then her mother might display the love for her child which she surely must have been hiding.

So she tried finding her mother the next day. Her mother was not at her usual spot, reading a book beneath a tree that day. Nor was she there on any day after. She had left immediately after saying the first words to her on the day before.

Historia slowly accepted... that she would never be given a display of maternal affection.

She continued every day by her curse and every night by forgotten dreams. Every day, she would make sure to read a bit of this book again. She had long since read the whole account but she always came back every single day to read it again.

Again and again...

She was acting in accordance to what the world wished for her. Just like the young girl in the strange story. Surely... if she just continued behaving like her then one day she could make everyone around her happy.
She just needed to try harder. Again. More and again.

She knew... that everyone would be happier if she wasn't alive... but, if she tried harder... she thought she would be able to make up for whatever it was she had done...

The pain kept building and growing. And it never stopped.

Because that was her curse. And she couldn't break it alone.

1 year later...

**Late Fall of the Year 845**

Historia had been laying against the tree where her mother once sat. She had ended up dosing off again and she needed to get back to collecting wood for the winter. It had been growing much colder recently but Historia had no extra clothes to comfort her from it.

When she woke up, with the sunlight and the wind blinding her as it seeped through the falling leaves, she swore she could remember parts of the dream. Blue flowers decorating the green fields. Then blood wallowing them whole. Screams and devouring. Seized corpses and ravaged lands. A calm hearth and a child's room with... a bird cage in the corner. A deep forest and life. Calling winds and deceptive rain. A massive skinless face which lifts its head above a great wall perhaps?

And within all of them... she saw an unbelievable image.

The one thing which wasn't blurred, which she was certain was part of the dream and not a misconception.

A young boy, the same age as her, crying and weeping. He was struggling forward, and he was moving forward amongst everything. Alone, he was fighting against this world alone. He quickly seems to age, into an old man. But he did not stop advancing. Moving forward against the world... until...

He turns back to face her, but the dream ends.

Gazing up at the sun, she realises it's midday and hurries to finish her task.

The day after, she met the ruler of the walls, her father for the first time.

She didn't dream again for the next 5 years.

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 - The Day After**

"So... you're saying this book you read as a kid was what you, or rather Krista, took after while we were in the Trainee Corps?" Eren spoke breaking the silence which had then ensued after Historia gave him an account of her childhood.

She had just recited him the first story within the book 'Historie'. They had been sitting at the same table again, looking out of the same window after Historia had answered Eren's question.

"Yes... but after I met my father on that day, I left it behind... but I kept followin that stories examples and well... just did whatever that would make people praise me... " Historia confirmed
the reasons and hoped secretly that Eren would understand her better by a just a little more. "And so... I guess I kind of wanted someone like that beside me... who could, you know..."

"Lead you to a death as a matyr?" Eren's disapproval ran code with the edge he carried as he questioned her.

"Yes... basically... so I'm sorry that Krista was such a pain for you to deal with," replied Historia, hoping to clear up any grudges that Eren might still hold. She looked down at her hands in front of her, nervously hoping Eren wouldn't reprimand her further. She had abandoned her act as Krista, and she didn't want to dwell upon that past of herself much more. But she didn't to at least clear things up with the one person who didn't like Krista.

She wanted to start afresh right now, that was what she wanted with the person she had ended up annoying to no end with her former persona. She waited for a while before peeking back up at him and seeing a smirk plastered on his face.

"You don't need to worry about your past anymore," Eren comforted her with reassurance, making her feel fuzzy at how things have changed since he glared right through Krista. "Just... focus on as you are now... and just do what you have to do to figure out what it is you want. But... I get why you might find it weird when I, or rather many of us are different from the girl in that story and what you have known... and you will find neither a hero from you're fairy tales nor an angel in this world. People like that... just don't exist like I told you. There's only what you need to figure out what you want."

She looked down again and unable to say anything else, she began thinking 'But... I don't know how... unlike you... you always know what you want... how do I... become like that... like you or — ' 

"Well anyway, you can take my word for it that just staring at me like that, is not going to give you an answer for your own problems," said Eren shrugging his shoulders as if trying to suggest that she stops drilling her eyes into the back of his head. "You're struggling on what you want to do right now... but you won't find that answer by doing what I do. It's just... something that will come to you when the time is right. So there's no point in hoping to get a sign for you, just giving me stares like that..."

"...okay." She felt embarrassed again and offered the only response she could think of. But... she was glad that Eren at least had understood that last part about her.

Half an hour ago...

After they had been laying around outside yesterday, watching the sky change and world change around them even just for a brief moment, Eren and Historia had decided on a half night's watch with each other. Eren had taken up first watch while Historia pulled the sheets over herself and settled in. She tried to sleep but the fact that she was in the same room as... someone like him, just made her unable to fall into the land of emptiness again.

It was only natural given the room only had the one room on this floor... and bed. They need to keep a lookout from the upper-most window since it was the only one which had a clear view on the rough outlines of the road to the house. Of course there was no reason to just assume the MPs would come by the road, however being who they were, it was still the best spot to keep watch from as the MPs would not be familiar with the area and so would prefer to keep by the road. There was no way to know from which direction the enemy might come one way or another and so they had to stick together in the same room.
They both knew that. But they both still couldn't help feeling awkward when they were alone like that. Historia knew Eren would never be the sort to try anything, and rather it was the exact opposite. She had been going through her memories back in the cadet corps and remembered how Eren would always get annoyed at her ever since that morning.

Things had changed since then, and Historia had taken a great amount of interest in how Eren simply... knew what he wanted to do. Of course he wasn't the only one, all the Trainees and everyone in the entire regiment, and people in much of the walls, knew what they want to do. She was a soldier. And even with the government after her for whatever reason, she was a member of the Survey Corps. *Is it because they want me dead for certain seeing as I didn't end up dying yet as they wanted?* she thought.

She didn't understand why now... and she had no way to. But, she needed to figure out what she wanted to do right now... and it's because of that, that her thoughts moved onto a person who... reminded her of just that. *What I want to do... how am I supposed to know?* she struggled internally. And so she once more, turned herself under the bed and peeked from under the sheets at Eren who was dutifully watching through the window.

*Just a few days ago... we were told that Titans... were once humans. The very beings he had sworn revenge upon. Back then... he looked hesitant... but immediately afterwards, he had already made up his mind on what he wanted to do. Reiner and Bertholdt... he knew exactly what he wanted even when his oath was turned backwards and his own world was shaken by this revelation... but me...'* She quickly ducked back under the covers as Eren turned to stare at her. He whispered her name and asked her if she was awake while she pretended she wasn't studying him oddly.

A ring inside of her. Telling her something she could not comprehend. That was what Eren had given her by just a few words... *It's not like back then... when I was Krista... and I hoped you were like me... a hero which Krista could follow, it's not like that now. I just want... to understand you Eren.*

Expressing her wish to herself in silence, sleep took her for a few moments before releasing her again. Every time, she would pop her head out and check that Eren was still there. In response, Eren would try turning to her before she hid again. After the first dozen times, Eren was getting really bothered by her.

First she had not been talking to anyone for a whole week, then all of a sudden she had taken an interest in him as soon as he spoke his mind just a little. In a way, it was an improvement in Eren's mind but he was starting to feel downright weird at being eyed constantly by someone who quite obviously wasn't fooling anybody. After an eternity, they finally switched watch. As Eren walked over to Historia, who was still trying to pretend that she was asleep and Eren had woken her up, and gave her the musket he had been holding onto. As Historia passed over to the window, Eren tried to fall asleep.

And then the feeling of eyes drilling at him just burned him. He rolled over to face Historia, who tried to subtly appear innocent. He sighed and rolled back over and the feeling of being watched returned. *It's better than her being all apathetic and detached... I guess, at least she can actually talk to people now; 'Eren though, unable to bring himself to be convinced. '*... dammit keep watch properly...'*

The feeling didn't stop throughout the night once. Thankfully Eren was at least able to get some sleep— just about the most awkward night he ever had with the exception of the one time Armin was snuggling into him because he was scared of thunder. But that never happened anyway— according to Eren.
When morning came, and as soon as he got up, he immediately got that feeling again. He turned to make eye contact with Historia who swiftly avoided him and pretended like she wasn't staring at him from the corner of her eyes. Again.

First she had not been talking to anyone for a whole week, then all of a sudden she had taken an interest in him as soon as he spoke his mind just a little.

"Historia... is there something which is bothering you." There was no way he could just keep quiet with how much the change in her demeanour was really starting to bother him.

"No."

She simply responded without hesitation. A simple firm attempt at trying to sound like she was doing no wrong.

"Well... there's something that is bothering me." He regained his stride towards her as she tried to hold a calm posture.

"What is it?" Historia asked, still intent on playing guiltless.

"..."

He sighed and grapping the chair opposite her, he sat down. Their positions had reversed from the day before, with Eren now sitting on the chair with the window on his left, as both of them faced each other.

"You know what it is... now seriously why are you staring at me constantly all of a sudden?" He clucked his tongue at yesterday's thoughts on how he called her 'honest'.

"It's because..."

There was no harm in telling the truth. She just didn't know how to phrase it without giving off the wrong indication. Historia continued,

"... you're really weird."

"..."

Unimpressed by the response he slightly gaped at her, unable to formulate his thoughts.

"Can I... tell you a silly story about my childhood?" She asked hoping, just hoping that Eren could connect the dots. That he could understand her just a little... and then she could come to understand him even if it's just a little. Unable to say anything else, Eren complied and patiently listened to her story from 6 years ago with the details of her personal life that were irrelevant to the operation at hand.

3 hours later...

Time passed after that, and soon midday arrived once more.

"Something is wrong."

Eren had been steadily pacing the room back and forth, trying to control his unsettled feeling. Captain Levi and he rest of the squad were to return by sunset tonight in the worst case scenario.
"... We should head out soon." He declared his decision, unable to wait another hour longer.

"Eh? But shouldn't we wait in case we get sent further instructions?" Historia questioned, having gotten herself focused back on the task since they last spoke. Right now, she needed to follow their orders.

"No, I don't like this." He replied, walking over and peering through the glass once more. "I feel like we need to go right now."

"... Are we being watched?" She was sitting on the bed, having had a short nap after ending up watching Eren almost all night she was quite tired, but her nerves awoke her from Eren's tone. He narrowed his eyes.

"The next safehouse is the one by the river, about 40km to the north-east. We should leave. Now" He turned away and began his way to the lower floor with Historia quickly following behind him. He pulled open the cupboard which held their two trench coats and ODM gear. Handing Historia's hairs, they quickly equipped themselves, and covered their weapons while checking through the house to ensure there was no clue that they were ever present.

Historia waited nervously by the door after checking the much smaller upstairs space as Eren approached her and nodded. He covered his ace with the hood and opened the door slowly before checking around the area without appearing too cautious.

"It looks clear. Let's go," Eren signalled and swiftly departing, he set the pace for Historia as they left along the road. Even though it was clear, he felt it. Something was off and so he hurried along. He had to make sure that the rest of his squad was safe. Eren's thoughts started considering worse scenarios, 'What if someone has gotten wounded? What i—'

"Hey, Eren..." Historia whispered, having to almost jog to keep up with Eren's long strides. She wanted to call out to him, but knew it was foolish to shout out the name of one of the most wanted people within the walls. Fortunately he managed to hear her and realised he had been rushing her much smaller strides. He apologised quickly and set a more suitable pace as the followed the road uphill.

The beating of feet against the ground reminded her of their days of training. Country roads and mountainsides, through rivers and across forests. One foot after the other in a continuous beat against the terrain just like a while ago in their memories.

1 year ago...

**Late Spring of the Year 849**

"ALL OF YOU DEAF-EARED MAGGOTS, WAKE UP NOW! GET CHANGED INTO YOUR UNIFORM AND ODM GEAR! YOU HAVE 15 MINUTES!"

Keith Shadis always held an intimidating aura, no matter what the time and place. His voice was practically roaring at the cadets whenever he spoke, save but for a few occasions when he genuinely seemed too astounded to speak when some certain cadets would reply some of the stupidest things he ever heard.

If such a case occurred, where after being absolutely exhausted from a particularly tiring day of training just from the day before, the trainees had been recovering in deep sleep yet where awoken with the loudest bellowing they have ever heard from the instructor followed with slamming the
door hard enough to shake the wooden building, then it might just be enough to wake the dead from eternal sleep with this new form of demon awakening system.

In his defence, Eren argued with himself that the bell had been sounding off in the distance, which had prodded him to wake up a few minutes prior. He had always been a light sleeper since that day, unable to rest easy knowing that they could attack again at any moment. And also, though he would never admit it knowing how Mikasa would start mothering on him again, it was because he still had nightmares of that day that he didn't often get much sleep over the past few years. Common occurrences became habit.

At least this way his restlessness made him alert, though he had nonetheless gotten a fright at the suddenness of it all. Some among the cadets were practically shivering in fright while the majority had been shocked awake and simply gapping at what was going on, until a few began stumbling out of their beds and changing promptly. He stretched quickly, getting his mind settled, for a few seconds before turning to Armin's empty bed. 'Oh that's right, it's his time on watch duty this night... Which means that it's anywhere from 1 to 4 in the morning...'

Having no intention of pissing off the head instructor, Eren got up, stumbled over and opened the cabinet across the room where his training uniform was stored. More trainees were following his example now, albeit with a lot less consistency in their step. Groggy from the lack of sleep, some were being helped out by their friends and together bumped into people while trying to cross the room half awake. Some where even trying to tuck themselves back into sleep, complaining about what was going on.

And some had actually been able curl up under their sheets and go back to sleep despite having the life frightened out of them earlier and the now ongoing commotion. Eren went up to one of those people after strapping in one of his boots securely.

"Connie... wake up." Eren nudged the bald boy to no avail before he then began to shake him. Connie whined lowly as his face turned up to Eren from under the sheets.

"Ugh... Eren go away, I'm already having this crap dream where Shadis wants us to get to training in the middle of the night." Connie's eyes blinked and strained as the other trainees began to light matches and put the lamps on with them. "Oh... looks like I'm still in that stupid dream... Go bother someone else dream Eren."

"Connie, just get up. Shadis might come back seeing as we're going to end up late one way or another." Eren warned him one last time before seeing the first cadets leave and following after them once he had strapped in his other boot properly and throwing his jackets over himself.

The night was cool and there was no breeze in the air at the time. He pushed himself forward and began a light jog towards the storage houses, remembering the instructor's time limit. He saw a steady stream of girl leaving their dormitories and making their way to the same place. He shook his head out of any distractions like worrying if Mikasa might spot him and start coddling him once more.

He entered the storage house quickly, and moving his way past the other trainees, he found his own gear shelved and stored in his compartment. He hurriedly began equipping it, knowing he was short of time but wondering if it even mattered when clearly much of the recruits will not make it in time. As more trainees came in, he heard more questioning and grumblings amongst them. The vast majority naturally had no clue what was going on, but proceeded with the instructions. The girls had heard Shadis's scream and had been awoken even before he entered, and had promptly got to work in getting changed and prepared and were able to escape his yelling.
"Hey, Tom you said this was something that we would be examined for a while ago right?" A trainee whose name Eren did not know had spoken to his friend just a little away from Eren as they all began strapping the belts around their torsos.

"Oh, yeah that's right... what was it again, an examination for a mission in the middle of night to test our reactions or something?" The trainee who went my the name of Tom, began attracting a lot of attention from everybody nearby.

"Huh, Tom you know what's going on then?" Another friend joined in on their conversation while Eren eavesdropped while switching to his waist belts. He also noticed that Armin's gear, which was placed on the opposite side of the hall had already been taken. He assumed that his friend must have already gotten early warning and equipped himself earlier than everyone else.

"Yeah if I recall, my brother told me about this when he was back in the trainees a few years ago. He had this shitty mission where he had to travel into the mountains and had to spent several nights without sleep because they needed to hunt down some bears or something since neither the garrison nor the MPs could be asked to deal with it so they decided to give that job to his trainee group and call it a training exercise." The cadets huffed, as they crowded around Tom and kept bombarding him with question and attention while Eren attacked his the boxes to sheath his blade in and equipped the handles in the holders beneath his arms before leaving to the main compound.

Then the operating device on the back of his hips crashed to the floor. He cursed and panicked as he turned round and picked it up. It was hanging of his left side properly but the harnesses along the right side of his body where completely loosened. Examining the problems he realised he had messed up when attaching the harnesses down his left leg.

Eren heard the scurrying of the other trainees around him who were leaving ahead of him now, while he was fastening the belt around his right ankle, tightening it quickly and properly but making sure not to rush and make a mistake again. Checking that his gear wold not collapse again, he briefed a sign of relief at the lack of damage thankfully. He run over to where the other cadets had arrived and formed a large unorganised group.

Eren looked through the crowds and managed to spot Armin who was being supported by Mikasa. Walking over, he immediately realised what the problems was.

"Armin, how much sleep did you get?" As Eren approached, he heard Mikasa ask him in concern. Armin mumbled through his dropped eyes as Eren came over to greet them both.

"Uh, I don’t know, but I must have done my whole watch so I’d have maybe no... I just, what's going on right now?" Armin's head was in a haze and he was unable to make sense of the situation.

"Hey Armin, take it easy. Apparently it's a training exercise we are doing," Eren responded as he came over and gave Armin a hand. Mikasa and Armin perked up at the idea unenthusiastically and looked to Eren for an explanation, who simply stated "it's just what I heard. Who knows, but we bet —"

"ALRIGHT, ALL OF YOU LACKLUSTERS, LINE UP AND GET YOURSELVES INTO RANK!" Shadis had appeared on the improvised stage of elevated land and bellowed his orders, silencing every conversation immediately. As he separated from Armin who seemed much more awake than moments ago and was beginning to tremble a little as he entered into military form. The late cadets had been hurrying over and trying to hide from Shadis's glare. "YOU ARE ALL 6 MINUTES LATE! FAILURE IN ACCOMPLISHING THINGS AS SIMPLE AS GETTING YOU'RE ASS IN GEAR CAN COST YOU YOUR LIFE!"
Shadis breathed back in as he inspected over the whole group, some still looked like they were hardly holding themselves awake. He sighed and resumed after gesturing a brown haired assistant instructor who was behind him over, who walked over next to Shadis. "YOU ARE ALL ABOUT TO HAVE A UNREHEARSED NIGHT OPERATION IN SELECTED TEAMS! EACH TEAM BE ASSIGNED A SEPERATE MISSION WHICH YOU WILL COLLECT AT THE GATE! AFTER YOU HEAR YOUR NAMES CALLED YOU WILL PROCEED TO THE STABLES AND BRING YOUR HORSES ALONG WITH THE REST OF YOUR GROUP'S TO THE GATE! YOU WILL ALL TAKE THE CAMPING EQUIPEMENT AND FIELD RATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN PLACED WITHIN THE SAME STABLE AS YOU'RE MOUNT!"

The news caused the morale of all the cadets fall into an all-time low, however naturally no-one would ever dare to speak out and seeing as another exhausting day was ahead, they steeled themselves — apart from the ones who still though it was all a lame dream. Shadis turned round and nodded to a second older assistant instructor who followed him down and in the direction of the main gate to the camp. The brown haired soldier then began calling the group names as soon as the two left, displaying the capability to carry his voice across the whole group without the need of even yelling.

"Squad 1. Ackerman, Bott, Springer, Arlet and Diamant!" Two of the cadets gave a sad glance to each other, seeing as the couple were not being placed in the same group and would not be seeing each other for several days. The relationship between Hannah and Franz did not go unnoticed by the commandant, and he had made sure to separate them this time round. Relationships between the cadets were discouraged though not banned, but the two in question had recently been getting on Shadis's nerves.

Eren however relaxed upon hearing that Armin would be in good hands with Mikasa. He at least knew, that they would be safe together, and he would not be getting overshadowed by Mikasa's superior abilities for once. He caught Mikasa's eyes and gave her knowing look to Armin who was still slightly staggering, unexcited with how bothersome his day is looking.

"Squad 2. Kirschtein, Blouse, Wagner, Kefka, and Carolina!" Eren became even more at ease, knowing that he wouldn't have to be dealing with a headache along the way especially with the complaining Jean would be making.

He hoped he would be put on a group with Reiner at least, not that the expedition sounded challenging to him at all, as it seems to be testing more on reacting at any moment than anything else, but he could always relax his guard whenever Reiner was around. The names continued to roll out, until they reached his group last. The teams had so far been rather strangely balanced so far, with the first three teams each containing candidates who where predicted to be running for the top 10, while the rest were a mix of the cadets with a more average skill base. Until —

"Squad 8. Braun, Hoover, Leonhardt, Jaeger and Lenz!" At first Eren felt happy knowing he was put into a group filled with people whose company he both respected and enjoyed— with the one exception of course. He shook himself awake and followed Annie who was right in front of him. He tapped her shoulder once the two had jogged out from the lined up cadets.

Eren offered a smile as Annie turned to face him. She scoffed at his smirking face but was unable to hide the ever so slightly upturned corners of her mouth, only making Eren smirk more as he saw it. As they jogged side by side, they saw Reiner and Bertholdt ahead of them, already not wasting time as the took the hint that the instructors were not expecting them to walk around at a leisurely pace. As they arrived to the door, Eren slowed down to let Annie go in first, however by doing so, a light body made the slightest contact with his side.
"Ah, I'm s—" Krista's sweet-coated words rang out in a casual apology before they were promptly cutting herself off once she heard Eren's irritated sigh. He didn't say anything to her but left her there as he entered into the stables again with Krista hesitantly going after him. Each of them proceeded to their respective location where their mounts were held. While Eren threw the saddle over his horse and began working on the straps and adjusting the reigns, he overheard the conversation nearby between Bertholdt and Ymir, the latter of whom had been part of squad 7 and was taking her time in preparing to set out.

"Hey Bertholdt, I can count on you right?" The tall man was startled by the typically snarky voice which Ymir used.

"'Huh?' Bertholdt offered, uncertain of what to say, yet already looking uncomfortable with Ymir prowling over to him.

"Don't give me 'huh'. Seeing as you both came in at around the same time, Krista is in your squad, right?" Ymir asked, quietly enough for Krista to not hear, although she was already a way away from where Bertholdt and Ymir were talking.

"Oh, yeah that's right." Bertholdt answered and began to sweat more as Ymir approached and casually threw an arm around his shoulder.

"I'll be counting on you to keep her safe. Look you're reliable and not the sort to try anything, so just make sure that you old pal Reiner doesn't get any ideas, alright?" Without having much room to argue, Bertholdt nodded and exhaled as Ymir pulled her arm off and left with the rest of her squad who were waiting for her.

Eren returned his focus to the task in front of him just as Bertholdt did the same. 'Now is not the time to be worrying about that. Damn it, focus. Why did I have to placed in a squad with her though. Agh dammit.' Eren mentally berated himself to not get so distracted but found he was unable to drift away from thoughts of having to be around her.

However, this was also his chance. Annie was in his squad as well, if only the opportunity showed itself, things could turn out very well. He followed after Betholdt after securing the compressed tent onto the back of his horse and holding it my the reins, he led it out. Reiner, Annie and Krista were already waiting in front of the head instructor and the assistant who called them forward after they all gathered.

"Squad 8. Jaeger, you will be the leader for this task. Here is your directive."

"Hu- I mean yes sir!" Eren stumbled. The news surprised him to say the least, but he quickly recovered himself into the soldier's salute, before stepping forward and taking the orders sealed with an envelope hesitantly.

"Move out. Read your instructions along the way and start heading for the industrial city first. Next squad hurry it up!" Making the salute once more, the Eren and rest of his squad mounted their respective horses quickly.

Eren lead his squad to the gates and mounted his horse quickly. Almost too quickly, as he felt himself almost end up swinging over the saddle, having been dragged down by the weight of the blade sheaths hanging off his right side of his ODM gear and nearly falling on the over side in the process. He was able to grab the reins just before though and steady himself back up, his panic only starting to sink in more as his horse took this as the sign to start moving.

"Eren, hold yourself together!" Reiner called, having observed the dismay the sudden news had put
Eren in and ushered his horse after his newly appointed leader. Unsettled by Eren’s mistake and not wanting to be in the presence of the instructors’ disapproving looks, the rest followed after them. Eren had managed to bring his mount to a halt just after leaving the gate and Reiner had moved ahead of them to reassure Eren.

Krista watched as she halted at the back of the group and listened in, hoping to try and not get in Eren’s way given that he still seemed to hold a bad impression of her from their last proper conversation almost a year ago. She thought ‘I just need to reign myself in... just keep my head down and support my squad. Then... I can do it... Eren would see me like everyone else... I haven’t failed as Krista... there’s still a chance...’ repeatedly through her head.

“Yeah... I’m alright, don’t worry Reiner. It’s just not something I would have expected but I’ve got this now.” Eren replied, having got his senses back and yelled over to his group, "alright, let's leave for the Industrial city at once."

Clutching the orders tightly and making sure they wouldn’t slip away, he tugged at the reigns and began to lead his group heading north-west. ‘Is this really happening... me, as the squad leader for an operation like this? Dammit, I can’t think clearly right now. what shou - "

“Eren! Slow down, there’s no point in charging off into the night!” Reiner had to yell for Eren to hear him, having been driving his horse at full speed away from everyone, though this time intentionally. Away from the reality of what was currently happening to him. It was all too nerve-wracking for him since this could very well affect whether he would graduate and join the Survey Corps. He was panicking at panicking too much. And he didn’t want any of his fellow trainees to see him like that.

‘Dammit, what am I doing.’ He brought his horse slowly to a halt while everyone caught up to him, concerned at his behaviour. ‘I’m already screwing up at acting like a leader... ugh, what now?’ He looked at the expressions of his squad members, only feeling worse at the second. Reiner was patiently looking at him, not letting Eren’s behaviour from a second ago phase him. Krista was acting concerned again, and Eren didn’t bother to look at her for another second. Bertholdt was waiting patiently, however Eren could feel the unease within them. And Annie...

'Damn, don't look at me like that Annie, you're gonna make me lose any confidence I have.' Her glare exuded frustration and made Eren want to hide himself behind Reiner. He always trained with Annie in hand to hand whenever he could after Reiner had shoved him over at her a few months ago. He could feel it every time they sparred, the strength behind her blows, the devotion in her stance and the true intentions in her eyes. he wanted to be like her, at least in unarmed combat where he felt he had some talent in from his past.

The one thing which Mikasa herself didn't put all her effort in seeing as it would never count anything towards their grades. And a chance for Eren to prove himself. He wanted Annie to praise him, just once. Just once, he wanted her to tell him that he's not as unskilled as when they first met. Just once, he wanted to know that he impressed her, even though the most Annie would ever possibly say on a good day, is that he did well. But he would know the truth behind her crafted words. Annie would always lie like that, but she would never bother hiding it nor pretend otherwise... unlike her.

Eren would know it, that he left a positive impression enough on her. If he could leave such a thing on someone so much more powerful than him, then he would know that he could do it. He knew he could do the same again one day. He knew he could one day crush the Titans and take the revenge he ached for.

"Eren, shouldn't we first read the directive." Reiner suggested, encouraging Eren to what he
should do with his role as a leader.

"Ah yeah, got it." Eren responded, realising just how calm he had become. He smiled mentally, seeing his end goal in his mind. He would do it, and he resolved himself for the task ahead. Pealing open the envelope he pulled out the directive along with yet another letter from within. Reiner lit him a match and handed it over for Eren to see as he began reading the instructions, becoming ever more perplexed as he came to terms with what they had been entasked with.

Unrehearsed Night Operation - Squad 8

Personnel: Eren Jaeger (as squad captain), Reiner Braun, Bertholdt Hoover, Annie Leonhardt, Krista Lenz

Task: Long Range Expedition focusing on Transmission and Transportation by following the provided route while relaying the necessary messages and resources as specified below. The Squad Captain must make the arrangements for the individual undertakings of each of the other team members. Objectives can be met by any means necessary so long as the listed requirements are completed and that it abides to both military and local laws and restrictions. Penalties will be imposed at the appropriate degree upon review of the mission and will be reflected in your final grades.

A written account of this task is not required, however in the case of any encounters or engagements which affects or is concluded to be prioritised above the mission, the appropriate measures are to be taken along with a member of the group being dispatched as an informant to the appropriate party.

Schedule:

1st Destination: Industrial City

Deliver the message, containing material and machinery requests for manufacture, enclosed along these instructions to the leading management office as a matter of urgency. The message should be relayed by midday preferably however any delays will not result in penalties provided that the message arrives before nightfall on the day of departure. Proceed to your next destination accordingly upon completion.

2nd Destination: Jinae

Make contact with the head officer of the supplies department stationed at the town of Jinae and collect a batch of official statements for transport which will be provided upon informing the stationed garrison of your squad and names as arranged beforehand. Proceed to your next destination accordingly upon completion.

3rd Destination: Stohess District

Deliver the batch of official statements to the stationed MPs in the district. An address has been imprinted onto the batch beforehand, however it is the squad leader's responsibility to entrust the delivery into capable hands within the division. Alternative delivery is acceptable but not recommended. Before leaving the district, obtain 6 additional horses which have been prepared beforehand at the local stables belonging to the Garrison. Proceed to your next destination accordingly upon completion.
4th Destination: Church of the Walls situated in Reiss regional lands.

Locate the public Wall Church within this area by interrogation. Deliver the horses to the priesthood in charge before the end of this week and verify the exchange with your squad leader's name and mission. Proceed to your next destination accordingly upon completion.

5th Destination: Orvud District

Make contact with the head officer of the relay department stationed in the district and confirm your arrival into the district by providing your squad leader's name and mission. Proceed to your next destination accordingly upon completion.

6th Destination: Ehrmich District

Make contact with the head officer of the supplies department stationed in this district and the group will be assigned with a wagon carrying supplies arranged beforehand for transportation. Horses for the wagon will be prepared beforehand, however at least one individual will need to be assigned to drive the wagon. Along with this, you will receive an exchange statement with the Reeves company seal imprinted. Proceed to your next destination accordingly upon completion.

7th Destination: Dauper

Deliver the supplies to the village chief and station the supplies as per the leader's instructions. The wagon is to be left at the stables along with the horses provided from the previous district. Proceed to your next destination accordingly upon completion.

8th Destination: Trost District

Make contact with any official settlement of merchants Reeves company and provide the exchange statement in return for several crates of products. Transport these products to the district's relay office and present them with the proof and address of the exchange statement. Return to the training camp promptly and report your return to the chief instructor to complete your mission. A formal appraisal of your examination will be conducted in the following days.

Maximum Duration: 7 Days - From/To sunrise of the day of departure/return.

Authorised by Head Instructor Keith Shadis

"What the?! Wh-one week?!” Reiner vociferated after Eren gestured him over to see the contents. The other three likewise motioned their horses over to a point where they could see the directive as well. They all huddled around Eren so that they could see with the limited amount of light between the match and just a tiny amount of moonlight. Each one of them unpleasantly surprised at the ordeal they are being asked to do and mentally voicing their disapproval to themselves as Eren initiates the complaints.

"Are they expecting us to actually... no, this isn't even physically possible to do. A carriage from Trost to Stohess takes about 3 days, even though we're travelling with military provided horses, for us to make that sort of absurd route along with all the stops, we would need at least 2 weeks." Eren rattled of from his memory the time periods which his father would often spend moving around.

"Not necessarily." Reiner assured everyone.
"Huh? Wait, Reiner, are you saying something like this is actually possible?" Eren spoke up the same question as the other three of their squad had at that moment.

"Yeah, the time limit is tight but the route should be around 2000 km. So long as we cover, let's say, 300 km each day then we will make it. And... although it does mention it, I can't see them demeriting us for swapping horses along the way so long as we leave them in a stationed garrison's hand. We can't know how long they'll last, but they should be able to take us to 300km each day so long as we keep riding for 10 hours each day." Reiner's string of calculations gave Eren some reassurance but was unable to lift the tiredness he could see would await them all.

'Damn... this is going to be tough. But, I guess it isn't unaccomplishable. Well... I guess we shouldn't waste any time.' Eren concluded, and then searched the envelope and pulled out the second letter within the envelope. "Alright... everyone, we need to make it to the Industrial city by high morning so that we can send these requests in good time."

Eren waved the second letter to them before pocketing it securely within his jacket and looked at his fellow squad members nodding back to him in acceptance. Reiner held his gaze, telling him everything he needed to know. Annie was silent yet Eren cold feel a level of expectation which lurked within her sky blue eyes. Bertholdt said nothing and simply looked nervous as always. And...

Eren turned to his thoughts, without bothering to look at the final member of his squad. 'It's still dark... maybe we could afford to rest a little further away from the camp. No, I can't say for certain, but we all seem to be awake enough to ride safely even with the lack of luminosity. Let's just get going for now.'

He looked around and regained his bearings to their route before kicking off his stead and restarting his groups movements. They all began to follow him, slowly getting into a steady pace with Eren in front. He could feel their eyes drilling into the back of his head, making him feel queasy after all the bewildering happenings one after the other, but he was able to stomach it while focusing ahead to the future. To his dream. This was just another step in the ladder, but an important one no doubt as he could feel. He had to prove himself. He had to.

The sky began turning lighter after a couple hours and soon the circular blaze of light soon rose from the horizon. The sun's rays drove away the chill from the night and allowed them to speed up the group's movements with the improvement of visibility. They rode in close formation with Eren feeling awkwardly out at the front as he lead the way down the poorly maintained path, pondering how so much had transpired with him ending up where he was now.

Along the way, after deliberating with Reiner on the details, Eren made the decision that they would cover the distance to the town of Jinae if possible by the end of that day. Entrance into the Industrial city was notorious for being slow given the population that lived there and the thorough checks of security which would be made. He decided that one of them should hurry first and deliver the message while the others would collect enough stocked food from the military authorities which they had access to. They would need around 2 days worth as they would have to attend to business at Stohess and would get the chance to resupply then seeing as even another day's worth of water in their tanks would be just another additional burden on their horses.

They knew for certain that they would be able to change their mounts at the district cities should they begin to tire after travelling all day however their timings would still be tight. From Jinae to Stohess, it would take a full day as a result of their detour and so they had little time they could spare. A distance of 2000km in a week. The concept of the distance kept playing in Eren's mind all the while during their course to the Industrial city.
What happens if we don't make it in time... ach, we're taking the shortest route and will be going off the main road in order to not make the slightest delay, but... it's strange. A complete circular rotation through the entirety of Wall Rose... what's with this mission? It's like they came up with the toughest course they could. Still, as long as Reiner says so, we can make it so long as I handle this properly and we aren't forced to do any detours.' Eren had been unable to come to terms with what they were dealing and the reasoning behind it. He wasn't panicking like before, but he was uneasy nonetheless. But he could see their route ahead. It was possible so long as Reiner's information was accurate... Reiner's information...

"Hey, Reiner. This whole trip is 2000 km right?" Eren craned his neck back over his right shoulder to look at the blond soldier.

"Yeah, that's right. Beats me why we're doing this long ass of a training exercise." Reiner scratched his temples as he was pondering the same line of thought.

"How... how do you know that for sure?" Eren didn't want to sound like he was doubting him, but something felt off to him. He couldn't picture how anybody might think that they would be doing a training exercise like this, and so how someone would remember such a figure. In a journey like this, it would be generally illogical to do such a roundabout trip when you could cross through the lands of Wall Sina provided that you had the suitable paperwork.

"Ah well, it... was just something I investigated in the past..." As Reiner hesitantly said that, Bertholdt become a lot more tense. Although he was riding slightly behind Reiner, Eren thankfully was unable to see him begin to sweat slightly.

Bertholdt's meek and gentle nature despite his tall bulk was joked about frequently amongst the training camp. Along with his unique sleeping positions, his most famous time being when he was found cuddling Eren of all people whilst in hanging off the edge of the upper bunk by his legs with his arms resting around Eren like a mother cradling her newborn - much to both their embarrassment when they were woken up by Jean's hysterical laughter, Bertholdt was also known for how easily he became nervous. Some said that his nervousness at its peak, it looked like he might literally explode from the compressed emotions.

As Krista watched Bertholdt from the group's left flank, unable to discern the meaning behind his behaviour, she had to agree with that notion. His stance really did make him look like he might suddenly burst, as if he is grasping at some words but unable to unable to bring himself to say them. She noticed how the grip on his reigns was right and he seemed... scared.

"Huh, investigated? Why?" asked Eren, became baffled at what his friend was telling him. To Eren, the details seemed... far too specific to just be something like common knowledge.

"Ah well, you see... I just had an interest in it a while back. When we were all amongst the refugees and well... me and Bertholdt were considering to search over areas around wall Rose where we wouldn't be dealing with famine like we have in the south. So it was just something we asked people about and so we got around that distance as an answer." Reiner improvised an answer, and concealing whatever the true reason was. Eren knew it, but he decided to respect Reiner's wishes and decide not to pry further.

"Hey Bertholdt," Krista called over to the tallest person of their group, deciding to speak her mind now that Eren and Reiner had finished.

"U-uh, yeah?" Bertholdt stammered, startled by the sudden change in atmosphere. Reiner also turned to look over his shoulder.
“There's no need to be so nervous,” she began to assure him with a positive smile, "we're all capable enough and we were probably given this mission since they believed we could handle it!”

"O-oh yeah, you're right. It's just that..." Bertholdt turned to Reiner mid reply, begging him to say something in place of him.

"Don't worry Krista, Bertholdt just didn't get his beauty sleep so he's nervous about a certain someone." Reiner said, managing to dispel the tension in the air as Bertholdt gaped and then glared at him, while Reiner laughed in response and Krista smiled along. Bertholdt then decided to suggest that Reiner should confess to his own crush like that, without revealing any hints. Eren soon joined in as they started conversing in trivial matters while Annie remained silent all the way.

She didn't know what had really troubled Bertholdt however he eased up much more afterwards and ceased being a matter of concern to her.

Krista looked out around the area and saw the distant walls of the Industrial city ahead of them. While looking straightforward she notices someone casting a side wards glance at her.

She offered a small smile in reply, trying to convey to Eren that he was doing his job as a leader well. But he instead kept staring for a while. Incomprehension evident within the green emeralds before he turned back and faced their first destination after a moment.

She didn’t feel annoyance from him just now at least. She only hoped that Eren might come to look at Krista just like everybody else.

But, though she chose to ignore it, deep inside she knew that she had already failed one summer before.

And she came to accept that in her journey.

---

Once more, anything that you would like to point out which is better or worse please do so! Also I noticed there where a couple lines which I had cut off accidentally last chapters so do please point out if a sentence doesn't make sense or is missing!

Anyways, as much as I would like to do a chapter every week, it's not something I can do unfortunately since I had already written a chunk of this chapter before I even published the last time and so was more or less able to get the rest done in a week. I will however try my best to get a chapter out once every 2 weeks although I can't guarantee this will always be the case either but I'll try keeping it a habit!

Ending Scene: WARNING MANGA SPOILERS - CONTAINS SPOILERS FOR SEASON 4 (OR WHAT WILL BE SEASON 4 AT LEAST)

It decided to rain on that day. At one moment, the sky was holding with the ununderstandable winds blowing again.

And then the rain fell.

Immediately everything, everywhere was being attacked and freshened by the outpour.

Dripping wet water soaked through his clothes as the one legged man sat outside on his usual spot at the hospital. On and on, it felt like it was giving him the judgement of the heavens. Beating at
him yet cleansing him simulatanously.

And then the rain ceased to fall on him. He looked up to see the dark cover of an umbrella, held by a bespectacled man that could have been passed as a grandfather by his appearance stood over him with a slight smile.

The one legged shoulder picked his crutch up and pulled himself up with it. The bespectacled man chuckled, at how the wounded soldier didn't listen to his advice, before leaning down his arm beneath the one-legged man's right shoulder. As the one-legged man supported his left side with his crutch, he entrusted the support of his right side to the man next to him.

The bearded man held the umbrella over them both with his right hand while his left arm fully cushioned the one legged soldier and gave him almost all the support he needed.

"And you are sure that nobody will notice the strongest warrior in the world walking around like this with a one-legged man from the hospital?" The wounded soldier asked.

"Don't worry brother. I know the place well enough, there's a route down the corner four blocks that way. Even if it wasn't raining this hard, it will be deserted at this time." The one legged man nodded in response to his older brother's answer.

Even if the company was different, he knew he wasn't alone... at least for now. And that kept him moving forward even for just a bit.

"What was that place called again... Hvergelmir?"

The wounded soldier couldn't remeber which one of them asked the question, but both left planning on their future destination.

The rain continued to fall...

Just like a hail of arrows or a barrage of coordinated missiles.

Or an omen from an ancient memory about the point of zero and the sparks of all colours and meanings.
I have to say though, as someone who loved each and every one of AoT's arcs, and felt that Uprising's political aspects were not boring in the slightest, the key issue I had with it, was the lack of discussion about what everything Reiner/Bertholdt/Ymir have said might mean. I mean yes, they had an exhausting 72 hours for all of them, and so the SC rested for about 10/11 days before chapter 51 came into full motion but still the one thing I'd have liked to have happened on screen was a discussion on all that they knew and the possibilities - You do not know how much I was thanking Historia for finally bringing it up in chapter 70! (+1 EreHisu points)

So yeah that's what I did between Eren/Historia here so sorry if it seemed redundant when as readers we would have all gone through these sorts of theories but I honestly wanted to know what Eren thought about this in canon, so yeah I just did an idea of how it could have been played out.

Chapter 3 - Eine Andere Reise

Late Spring of the Year 849 - 4 Hours after Departure of their Examination

A massive furnace, which from the outside looked like just one massive funnel, was releasing smoke fumes visible from a distance. It was the same height as the wall, a towering 50m, one of the two hearts of the remaining human territory. A massive production of technology, supplies and trade.

Security was high, and Eren and his group were stopped by the gate guards as they reached the city. Only one person was needed to be sent to the head office and Reiner decided to volunteer himself, having spent much of the day watching Eren in his mental turmoil. "Eren, I can go deliver that. You can arrange everything we will need for tomorrow.'

"Oh, don't worry about it, I'll go do it myself. Can you seek out the barracks here for our provisions yourself.' Eren requested Reiner as the gates opened for them, handing the older blond the directive as proof for their task.

"Are you sure Eren? There's no need for the leader to go on message relaying." Reiner replied, all five of them starting their horses into the temporary stables which one of the guards led them to.

"Don't worry Reiner, besides I think we can all agree you're the best at handling stubborn superiors who would likely complain." Eren decided to entrust Reiner with dealing with the lazy and possessive soldiers who wouldn't be inclined to share too much of their stocks no doubt.

"Alright then, see you soon." the oldest cadet accepted.

They all dismounted as Eren took the second message and cleaning his uniform up a little, verified the directions.
"Oh Eren, I have an idea just in case we ever need a way to contact each other without anyone else knowing the true contents of a message!" Reiner stopped him, excited at sharing an idea he recently had come up with.

"Oh? Show us then Reiner," Eren said, growing interested.

Reiner took the piece of parchment from him and the roughly designed graphite pencil which each of them usually had stored within their horse's baggage. Strolling over to a wall, as everyone gathered around Reiner, he spoke.

"A common use is to use capital letters or the first letter of a word at the start of a clause or sentence. Naturally it's not that hard to read such a message, so I propose that we instead first take a number somehow that's not too obvious but not too difficult to craft or forgettable either, like let's say... the numerals of the year?"

"Uh, yeah sure. I'm still not sure where you're going this this but okay." Eren nodded, while Krista and Bertholdt looked equally uncertain and Annie looked just that slightly bit inclined to listen.

"Well, you see, it's 849, so then we take the first letter of the 8th word, and then the first letter of the 4th word after that, then the 9th and so on." Reiner continued.

"Ah Reiner... it seems a little complicated, I mean this is only in a scenario where whoever we are dealing with would let us send a message or something right?" Bertholdt surprisingly spoke up, seemingly getting what his best friend was trying to do.

"We would need to be in a position where we are writing our last will or leaving behind a message for someone specific. That's the only use an idea like this would have any value." Annie's sharp words cut the holes deeper.

"Oh... yeah... I guess that's true... well we could... ahh..." Reiner realising the vital flaw in his hopefully good idea, lost his excitement instantly.

"... It's a pretty good idea anyway Reiner..." Eren tried to comfort his clearly slightly depleted friend, trying to offer up some encouragement. Krista smiled awkwardly, not being able to come up with anything more to cheer the big soldier up.

Realising how awkward the silence had really began Reiner just sighed turning, and placed both his hands on Eren's shoulders as he whispered into Eren's ear, "please don't tell Armin! I'll show him a clever idea someday as well!"

Awkwarded out by the proximity of his comrade, Eren nodded and smiled sheepishly. He didn't know what was going on between Reiner and Armin although he had seen it all in good play as they once started playing some sort of intellectual routine which Eren just chose to ignore, not wanting to get associated with their common smart talk and whatever a 'theoretical' thingy was.

"Yeah, don't worry. Alright then, let's just get moving now... if we... get the chance to use Reiner's idea then... that'll be... nice for Reiner?" Eren smiled, cocking his head as Reiner nodded happily understanding what Eren meant. In his mind, Reiner swore he would beat Armin's idea of how to build an aeroplane in their intellectual competition. He will avenge his humiliation of not knowing what the hell a tail of a plane did with an either better idea to show Armin someday!

Everyone nodded as they split their paths. Eren distanced himself quickly from the others. As soon as he crossed into the city, he briefed out in relief.

He had made sure that he would be the sole person delivering the manufacturing request so that
he could be alone for a just a short while. He would happily sit in the company of either Reiner or Annie and despite his meekness, Bertholdt's presence was soothing — once those stupid rumours about how Bertholdt cuddles Eren in his sleep would be forgotten that is. But it wasn't just Krista that made him feel uncomfortable, it was the feelings that they all seemed to be emitting about him.

Frankly, Eren was unable to blame them. Instead of calmly assuming his position, he panicked, lost focus and ended up embarrassing himself somewhat in front of his peers. Even after Reiner brought him back into the task at hand, he was stumbling around in his thoughts and being indecisive. Instead of leading my example, he had ended up making his comrades doubt him. Not that any of them would ever confess it, but he could feel it in their gazes.

So he had made sure that he took this short time alone to mentally berate himself and shake his head back into the proper mindset. He stumbled as he walked over the uneven road, no need to put on any appearances as he walked. A few people turned their gazes to his military uniform and would whisper about how young he looked. He paid them no mind, focusing only in shaking out the sleep, frustration and unease from his body.

He matched his breathing pace and cleared his mind. His priorities became set as his body began responding properly just as he reached the head management building of the city. Tall offices, emphasising its professionalism. The task went smoothly from there. He handed the letter in as he was responded with scoffing at his young age before being sent off.

Eren soon returned to the gates where he found Annie waiting alone, eating a freshly acquired apple. She was waiting alone, in case he came back before Reiner and the others did, who had gone to report to a higher ranked officer since the regular soldiers weren't feeling helpful. He chatted with Annie in content silence for a while as the other three returned. It had taken a lot longer than expected. They needed to hurry to keep on schedule of reaching Jinae by the end of the day, then to Stohess district and the Reiss church tomorrow.

It had gotten dark faster than expected. They had originally planned to set up at Jinae and request to stay at whatever barracks or encampment they offered. He had heard from Marco a while back, that since it was a decently large town he came from, there must have been official lodgings for the dozen or so soldiers he would see patrolling every day.

Their business had taken longer than anticipated, and they were still about 2 hours away from the town, with their mounts exhausted and the strain from the long day begin to take it's toll on them.

Eren made the call to set up here for the night as they lacked torches or any other means of seeing and to reach Jinae immediately in the morning, and to get tents out as they moved into a clearing a little ways off the road near the trees.

Bertholdt gathered everyone's horses and went to tie their reigns firmly round the nearby trees. They were al feeling sleepy, and stretched their bodies from the long strain of horse-riding. As soon as Eren had handed his reigns to Bertholdt, a large arm was thrown over his shoulder as he turned to meet Reiner's smirk.

"So then Eren, how do we set up sleeping arrangements for the night?" asked Reiner, eyes revealing amused mirth.

"Huuh?! O-one tent for each of us, what else?" Eren responded, hoping he wasn't about to be pulled in into 'that' talk.

"Oh come on Eren, we're all tired, and we need to leave earlier tomorrow again. There's no need to put in extra effort. What'd ya say about just bunking all together in a single tent?" Reiner mused
his idea out loud for everyone to hear, earning him a clear glare and indication from Annie and Krista to be startled and appearing in quite the inner turmoil.

"Reiner," Annie strutted over challengingly as Reiner stared back carefreely while he kept hanging off of Eren, "unless you want to spend your night with your ass hanging from the tree, don't go pulling the suicidal maniac into your ploy."

"Ah, but Annie, it'll be insubordination if Eren orders it!" Reiner wagged his finger smugly at the displeased blonde.

"Then it's good thing Eren isn't that much of an idiot to do that." Annie answered confidently. Eren knew the sign of Annie's temper flaring as she brushed aside the front bang of her hair.

"Oh come on Eren, don't you want to snuggle up every now and then?" Reiner continued to - jokingly?- convince Eren. "Say how about this. Two people per tent while the other keeps watch? Let's have a draw for it!"

Eren firmly shook his head and sighed, as Reiner bounced off to pick something up from the woods next to them. Annie made eye contact with Eren, who returned the shared knowing look of mutual agreement between each other. One tent for Annie and Krista, the other for Eren and Bertholdt with Reiner on watch for the whole night as punishment.

"Alright here," Reiner insisted with his play as he distracted everyone from setting up camp properly, while he held five sticks in his hand. Bertholdt returned along with him. "We'll decide by each of us choosing a stick, and whoever has the longest stick is paired up with Bertholdt, whoever has the shortest is paired with Krista and —"

"Reiner," Eren tried to burst him out of his bubble — unsuccessfully.

"— if you get the stick which is equivalent in ranking to your own, you're on first night duty and the rest of the complications can be sorted out afterwards! It's completely fair and by chance!" The large man chanted, hopeful at the idea of spending a night next to a certain girl which-he-totally-absolutely-did-not-have-the-slightest-crush-on. He thrust his hand out to Eren first, having held each of the differently lengthen sticks at deceiving points in order to try and rig the game.

Eren sighed and tried to talk reason into him, but decided to humour Reiner at least before he shot him down - or Annie did it for him from the looks of how she was nearing her limit of unamusement.

Krista herself looked uncomfortable, uncertain of how to resolve this and get her comrades all happy and together. Bertholdt just shook his head gently, knowing no good would come from this.

Eren grabbed hold of the twig closest to Reiner's thumb. And tried to pull it out, intending to lightly jab Reiner with it before splitting their lodgings into the only acceptable way for the whole group. And tried to wiggle it out of Reiner's grip again.

"Er... How about choosing another..." Reiner suggested, keeping a tight hold of the short twig which Eren had selected. The shortest of the lot. "That one's err... taken."

"So now you're just openly admitting to rigging this from the start," Eren sighed before choosing the middle stick along, as he whipped it out and lightly wacked Reiner on the hand. "Come on, we're not doing this your way alright."

Reiner playfully whined and placed his arm around Eren again as he whispered, "oh come on, that's the second shortest do you can spend the night with Annie! Come on, I see the way you guys
always pair up in training. Alone, away from others, you can just sneak an arm 'accidently' beneath the sheets and then —"

Eren elbowed Reiner in the gut lightly, the latter whom chuckled heartedly to express that he wasn't actually serious. They all resumed to their work properly, Reiner relenting his idea after getting kicked almost right into the fire which Annie had set up earlier by the very girl herself. They dined by the campfire together, all of them sharing their complaints and being open with their displeasure as Reiner listed off all the things they had to deal with.

One way or another, Reiner did not escape first watch. Eren had fallen asleep quickly after he returned to the boy's tent. Until a kick in his back raised him from sleep again. Unintentionally of course, Bertholdt had thrown his leg all the way across Eren's backside in his sleep.

Eren decided he might as well take over from Reiner now, even though the exhaustion was still evident as he left the entrance of the small tent. The campfire had since died out and Reiner was struggling to stay asleep as Eren patted him and told him to go inside.

After thanking him, Reiner went back inside again as Eren pulled his jacket over himself to scurry away from the cold night. He was half dozing off immediately, barely able to make out anything in the darkness.

"Hey, um... Eren?" The bubbly yet this time very controlled voice breathed next to his ear.

"Yeah? What is it?" Eren was not particularly startled, noticing how Krista had gently exited yet not registering anything to respond with. What did surprise him was how close she was to the point where her warm breath travelled with a soft smoke and tickled his ear due to how oddly close she had gotten. Perhaps she had been checking if he was even awake?

"Um, well... I was just wondering... I mean... I, I wanted to ask if we could not spend the tomorrow night at the Reiss farmlands..." Historia muttered.

"...why?" Eren questioned, thinking back to the agreement they all made on the plan earlier on that day.

"... just because..." Historia crept closer to him, making sure nobody was around, "... I, um, well I used to live here... and I didn't leave on the best of terms, so I really want to avoid any chance of interacting with anyone who could recognise me..."

"Ah, alright, that shouldn't be a problem, we certainly could cover more ground that way," Eren reassured her much to Historia's surprise.

"Wait, really?!" And then her fake smile returned, although not fully able to cover her relief. "Ah, well... thank you. I didn't expect..."

"What?" Eren picked up on her unfinished sentence.

"Oh... I just thought... that you know... I just got the impression that you didn't really like me." Historia nervously tried to phrase herself, not wishing to reveal how much she had taken Eren's harsh words to heart.

"Well, that doesn't matter, right?" He gulped softly, feeling a bit perplexed at how upfront she was being. "We're comrades after all... so it's my job for this mission to look out for my comrades, right? Just like... I said last time, right?"

"Ah... um right..." Historia finished. This would be the part where she would smile and agree with
someone sweetly. But she knew Eren didn't like that. Just for the rest of the next few days, she
needed to appear nervous, and that way she will avoid suspicion as to why she isn't her usual self.
"Oh! And right, here!"

She handed him something from her jacket pocket and said "it's something I picked out earlier,
back when we were getting stuff for the next few days, and I forgot to give you yours."

A fresh looking apple. The sort of fruit which had become relatively rare since the loss of Wall
Maria where most of it was produced. A deep red and alluring intensity was engraved into it, like
the blood floating in the sky as he saw on that day, or the deep sunset which would occasionally
show itself at its darkest shade.

He remembered seeing Annie biting onto the sweet crimson orb of fruit. It reminded him of an old
story he heard in the past about a sleeping beauty who after eating the poisoned apple, was set
into eternal slumber until her true love awoke her. A tale naturally designed for children... though
he felt Annie suited the sleepy image quite well.

He thanked her for the food as she nodded and returned to her shared space with Annie. He felt he
owed her a food debt as Sasha would call them, not that she had ever repaid or remembered hers.

Just a small debt of gratitude, that was all.

Just one he wanted to repay someday.

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 - Several Hours after Leaving the Woods Safehouse**

Just one rain droplet.

It fell from the light grey shaded clouds overhead.

It platted onto the ground and faded immediately from existence as the soil absorbed it.

The rest of the rain followed soon after, gently beating the earth as more attacking water joined it.
It reminded her of that time a year ago when they were travelling together as a group through the
land. Main roads in the cities would be paved with stone as well as a few major routes within the
land of Wall Sina. Beyond that, roads were in exponentially lower in maintenance the deeper one
would go into the countryside.

Often, it was just worn down paths which lacked dense foliage that would be recognised as roads.
Drag lines of carts or grassless paths which would be indicated by the dead earth which would
deny the growth of life on them. When the rain became a downpour, the earth would become
muddy quickly as small puddles would grow quickly, yielding the victory to the water.

Historia's legs were tumbling and tangling together as a result of walking nonstop for the past 6
hours. Ordinarily, even for her, this shouldn't have brought her to the point where she had to force
herself to breath in order to push away her tiredness. She had managed this sort of distance several
times before while being encumbered by much greater weights back in the training.

But she couldn't right now. There was no fear pushing her onwards, and no motivation she could
pull herself forwards towards.

So she almost stumbled, caught herself, stepped forward, stumbled again, and continued as she
tried to quieten her struggles from the figure pushing on in front of her. Rain dripped down his
rough green cloak, although some of it must be seeking through the cloth like it was for Historia.
Her back felt cold from the dampness and her neck was being hit by the angle of the rain to which they were forced to walk in the direction of. No matter how far she pulled the hood down to cover herself, the rain was finding it's way deeper into her clothes.

The music of the raindrops hitting the ground, leaves and herself was ceaseless as it muddied the road along with the slope to which they were adjacently walking to. The wet earth began clamping itself onto her boots, forcing her to expend even more effort to lift her feet. Each time she made a new step, she would slide ever more slightly now. She kept her head down, eyeing the floor to make sure she wouldn't slip up.

Their pace had slowed, as Eren must have acknowledged this inconvenience. They hadn't talked at all since the rain began falling soon after they left, not that they really should have been.

Unlike during planned missions formulated by teaching instructors or scheduled expeditions to further the Survey Corps' efforts against the Titans, Eren and Historia's departure was far more impulsive and in the moment, upon the former's intuition. As a result, they had left considerably less well prepared than they would otherwise. They had at least taken the precaution of equipping themselves with ODM gear and cloaks however their supplies beyond that were non-existent.

Generally, this shouldn't have been a problem, as per the orders which Hanji had issued before leaving, although flying through the trees with their skill wouldn't be an issue against men armed with rifles, however even if unlikely, if they were spotted travelling through the trees then their general direction could be traced and give the MPs valuable bearings as to where they would search next.

There was also the issue of becoming lost, as the river was quite inconsistent with its flow, Eren and Historia could end up flying past it given their need to be more in the centre of the relatively large woods if they were to have the suitable sort of trees to which they could latch on to.

Thus, following along the side of the road out from their original house, before then breaking off and turning northeast up the off-stretching road which followed the river to their left hand side, was the decided procedure which Eren and Historia were to follow. Travelling cloaked in the thin border of small trees, bushes and reeds which were between the road's slight slope and the river would be the best way to not hide should the need arise and to not attract attention.

Of course, this however was only to happen if nobody from squad Levi, the other scouts divisions nor further messengers were to arrive before dusk on the second day. In a way, they were neglecting their orders however although Eren's senses were not as fine as those of many others, they were by no means dull and they had been advised to improvise the manner of their departure should the need arise. If they felt they were about to be found, prioritise on hiding and escaping. If they were about to be caught, use the ODM gear to conceal their trail. If the worst case scenario came to pass, and only if it did, Eren was given permission to use his Titan power.

It would be messy to escape afterwards, however it was better than getting taken by whoever was behind this. They had to avoid attention, and if Eren transformed, either the light or the steam would give away their location.

And so... they had taken off upon Eren's wishes.

They had not seen anyone at all so far, inhabitants in a rural area like this were few. No signs of the MPs either, only the jittering of birds, and a small group of rabbits which had been finishing eating just before evening time. The sky had been growing darker now as the night began to approach. Or perhaps it was a new set of darker clouds which had crossed over. Historia could not tell.
There was still quite a long way to go.

Originally they had left a little after noon, and their journey would take around 8 hours to complete given their clunky gears despite being trained in using them, they were still a heavy weight to their movements.

Constant walking, not a moment of rest, nor a moment of time lost. The ground was often uneven, littered with fallen branches and deformed rocks and stones.

Eren seemed completely at ease unlike her. He didn't stop, stumble or show any signs of fatigue.

The ODM gear was cumbersome as it rattled every time she made a step. Almost again. She almost slipped in the ever growing moist mud but she manages to step forward once again.

"Hu- argh!" But surprisingly Eren didn't. In a split second, his foot slipped from the squishy mud as he collapsed backwards. Reacting instinctively Historia leaned forward and grabbed his arm just before he fell and managed to steady him despite his weight.

Eren quickly adjusted his feet properly and took the burden off Historia. "Crap, thanks Historia."

The girl didn't respond and instead kept a hold of his arm.

"Historia?" Eren looked confused at the firm grip she still held on him. "You can let go of my arm now."

"You might slip again." She stated.

"Huh? Yeah... Thanks for helping me out there. I was walking too fast myself." Eren expanded, yet Historia still held on.

"You might slip again." She simply repeated again.

"... Yes I've got that... But what are you doing?" Eren once more struggled to find a way to talk to Historia. An improvement for sure... But this was growing awkward... Again.

"I'm holding onto you, so that ... you... don't slip... again?" Historia let go this time, not knowing what she actually was doing.

"Er.. yeah okay... let's... yeah," Eren said taking the lead again. Making sure he stepped forward properly this time Aias he moved slightly more away from the road and closer under thin line of trees were it wasn't quite as muddy.

Only to slip again even while focusing his step. This time however, it was side wards and he managed to support himself on a tree.

"... should I hold y—" Historia began, almost smiling beneath her hood. Almost.

"No thanks." Eren grumbled embarrassed. It was easy to take things like this for granted. He shook himself awake again, a habit he had been able to get into a while ago. He could just clear his head when he found something to focus on.

He took the lead once more properly, despite his tiredness which he concealed from his companion. Historia followed watching him in front. The wings of freedom which would usually be engraved onto the back of his cloak was missing. It would be foolish to show to the world that they were members of the scouting legion. Instead she was just faced with the dark green and
rough texture of the cloak, the same colour as the leaves of the forest around them and the ever flowing river to their left.

They continued on. Not seeing anyone, nor seeing a single sign of any pursuers or onlookers for the 6 hour journey.

With the rain falling ceaselessly upon them both.

At last, night hit them. Eren motioned her over to a slight clearing where a tree had collapsed and seemingly divided into two separate logs to which they seated themselves on. Historia practically collapsed as she regained her breath at long last.

"Here," Eren called her, initiating an opening for conversation between them as he handed her the field rations he had picked up. "We should eat now, but we'll have to proceed in the night once our eyes get adjusted to it. At least the rain has stopped and the clouds have left."

She was sitting about 10 feet across from him. Delving in and out of her memories, she gathered up the nerves to ask him a question she truly wanted to know. She remembered something she overheard once. At that very trip 1 year ago, when she had listened in on Eren and Annie talking alone while waiting for the other three. Historia had actually been sent to pick something up through that direction but had avoided both of them in her haste, and not wishing to disturb Eren either back then.

'... even since I was a kid even before we were driven out of Shinganshina, I was going to join the Survey Corps.'

"Eren... why are you did you really join the Survey Corps?" Historia asked the question that he left unasked a couple years ago. To annihilate the Titans. Revenge. That was Eren's motive, and everyone in the Survey Corps knew that. But... if he said he wanted to join the Survey Corps even before he witnessed the fall of Shinganshina... even before he faced the Titans... she felt there might be another reason why he joined... it was different from her hiding behind the pretext of being a kind-hearted person while following a death sentence given to her. Eren's rage was genuine, that was for certain. But —

"That's because... I want to leave the walls... and I want to know... what's beyond the ocean... no, that's not quite it... I know what's beyond it, it is there, beyond the ocean... it has to be..."

Historia was about to inquire about 'it', uncertain what the pronoun was referring to. But in that moment, Eren's body stiffened, his eyes widened as if coming to a realisation.

"Reiner, Bertholdt, Ymir and... Annie... they came from beyond the walls," He gaped for a moment before shaking himself, reached for the key tucked beneath his layers of clothes with one hand and after bringing it out, gazed at it intently while Historia watched it. Frowning at the key, Eren continued "of course they did... somewhere... beyond Wall Maria... that's where they were planning to take me."

'Why? Calm down, think, what else did they say, everything, remember everything. Don't give into rage... not yet, save that for when we meet again, otherwise I'll never accomplish anything,' Eren thought.

'Their hometown... in Titan territory. No... beyond it perhaps? That's right, the Titans even go after them as well. Which means wherever they live, it has to be somewhere that Titans can't get to. What else... that bastard... what else did he say... that there won't be any more need for them to attack the walls again if I went with them. Why?"
"Your Titan power... in that moment, you were able to control the mindless Titans around you. You were able to command them." Historia hesitantly spoke up, wishing to add something to the topic, with the feeling bubbling up as to how she never actually knew a single thing about Ymir's past. Not even a hint to something. But if there was one thing which froze everyone in that battle, which made Ymir first begin following the Survey Corps back, it was that time when Eren used his power for sure. "After that... Everything changed... and I guess Ymir's wishes did too."

"Ah, that's it. Which means... they're after the ability to control the Titans... why, is it... now or did this need arise some time ago? How long has this been going on for..."

After the battle ended with the successful recovery of Eren and the Survey Corps had returned behind the walls,

"Warrior and soldier... and...that there's no future for this world... that Beast Titan and... the real enemy...""

"No future inside this walls... that's right, Ymir said that as well while you were unconscious." Historia recalled.

"Oh, right, I read the report on what you said as well," Eren wanted to confirm some details now that Historia seemed to finally have started to be able to talk about Ymir again, "Ymir said that outside world isn't as bad as we think. That nobody out there will tell it's better that you'd never been born. I... still don't know what she meant... the Titans or..."

"A society perhaps. This hometown of theirs. A town of Titan shifters perhaps? But... she said she somehow stole the power of the Titans from one of their friends. And for that crime, bringing you over to their side would pardon her. Or —"

"Or that was just another one of her lies to try and convince me to come over to her side." Historia's voice had grown cold again, no doubt thinking over back to that moment.

"Ah, well there's that as well. For certain, at least the commander with have drawn these same conclusions. But there's so much still that we don't know... and I feel that I'm forgetting something..." He rubbed his eyes and the side of his head with one hand, a slightly painful feeling in the back of his head came to him as he continued staring at the key clutched tightly in his other hand.

There was nothing left that they could divulge from each other's experiences. Nothing that they could make sense from. Mystery upon secrecy upon deceptions. They settled into silence again, until —

Historia peered over Eren's shoulder as her body froze.

Her eyes made contact with another pair of darker eyes of something just at the edge of the forest across the fading road. Deep black eyes of an abnormally large mass of dark brown fur. It eyed right back at her, as she halted her breath, playing through her mind the thought that she was just imagining it.

Eren took notice of her soon enough just as the light drumming thuds of the silent beast lumbered almost silently through the thin grass. His hood covered his head and so limited much of his sight especially at the corner of his eyes.

Historia has spent the past week completely detached from her surroundings, and as a result her senses had dulled significantly by her inner turmoil. Frankly she had let go of her concentration in
the recent days and taken the security between Captain Levi's strength and the Titan power within their ranks and she had therefore become complacent while spending time in her thoughts and memories contemplating.

As a result —

"B-Behi—" Historia's mutter was barely able to take audible form as Eren turned his body slowly to face the direction which Historia was fixated upon. Much too slowly as pain erupted from his right side.

The beast had closed the distance unpredictably quickly and quietly especially despite it's bulk. It crossed the distance from across the road in no more than half a dozen long pounces before opening its maw without a roar nor a growl and sinking it deeply into Eren's right shoulder, sinking its teeth easily through the cloth of his military uniform and into his flesh, digging at Eren's upper right ribs causing blood to seep out into the fabric at the point where the bear's razor's held into him.

Not expecting such a swift attack, Eren screamed at the sudden anguish which thundered through his body, snapping Historia out from her daze just as the bear threw its left claw at Eren's face. Historia immediately fell on her back as the bear pinned Eren down as it began trying to lacerate the rest of his body, as he was hit with the strength to make him lose consciousness for a moment.

Eren's head had hit the floor and given him yet another source of agony to deal with as he processed how the beast had forced its body other him while it's powerful jaw gouged into his right side, only probing Eren to gasp and struggle against the superior weight as he tried to regain the air knocked out of him by the impact.

A hit of the bear's fast left paw across the left side of Eren's face, left several deep scars etched into his face, drawing the blood out of him in droplets as well as taking out his left eye completely just as the agony hit him. Half blind, winded and hardly able to move from the bear's grasp, Eren barely muffled his yelling as he clenched his teeth together and forced his remaining right eye to move rapidly, crazed by the ongoing pain as the bear pressed it's right hand and crushing the bones in his right arm as well.

Historia trembled for a second longer before grasping the situation and looking around in panic, looking to grab the rifle... which they had left stored in the house they had been staying at. The bear released it's mouth with Eren as it growled and re-positioned its body over her brunet companion.

In a swift motion, which would have caused the neck of a human to surely crack, the bear faced her fumbling form as she pulled out the handles of her ODM gear from under her shoulders.

She looked into the beast's eyes that were like the ominous starless night, as it stared back into her own sky blue and trembling eyes. Once more she became paralyzed as she stared back, unable to proceed to attach the blades in her sheath onto the handles. She was able at least to get a good look at it now.

It was truly massive for even its size. Most bears within the walls had been driven to the point of extinction by the humans searching for more land to move into, harvest or seize to further their area of control. They were a rare sighting to begin with, and reports of the largest bear which hunters might have caught was somewhere around 2 metres if she recalled from Sasha's various tales, while averaging around 1.5 metres just as the one which Sasha's father himself apparently once managed to take down.
On the farm, where she lived alone, without the acknowledgement of her grandparents either, she truly saw the animals as her only friends from solitude, and so she had certainly not been overly keen on the stories which Sasha would tell where people would hunt other animals. Naturally, she was good friends with Sasha regardless, after all her family didn't do it for sport and fun, but for food and customs but she felt that Sasha's word on these sorts of reports were accurate.

The dark brown mass in front of her was practically 3 metres long and as tall as she was herself even when standing on all fours. But, what took her notice the most was it's undersides were unhealthy amounts of blood was leaking and dirtying its fur. Another wound, though smaller was on one of its hind legs. Bullet wounds, fired from muskets from someone who was trying to take the animal's life.

Her concentration returned as the bear roared again, at her this time, and shaking her awake as he fumbled and almost missed inserting the blades into the handles as she drew panicking. Eren's face was muddy and being crushed by the pressure of the bear keeping its left paw dug into his back, dyeing his clothes in yet another shade with the blood.

She pointed her blades as she took a tiny step towards the beast, knowing that she had to help Eren immediately. She began dreading how long she had ignored him there as his body shook desperately trying to free himself.

"A.. aah... get back!" She made a miniscule jump towards the bear, fear restraining her movement as she thrusted her right blade at the beast. She had moved to a distance of 8 feet away from the struggling Eren, with the 3 foot blade naturally still unable to reach past the remaining 3 feet to the dense fur of the beast even after she extended her arm as far as she could. Historia whimpered, unable to overcome the disconnection which had formed between herself and reality, unable to harness the military procedure she endured through for several years, unable to cross an easily crossable distance to pierce the bear's skin.

And in that moment —

The bear's skull was rattled by the smashing first which was dealt upwards. The bear's head was knocked to the side a little and instantly shook the pain away before returning to the target below it, only to be pound again in the side with even greater force than before.

The momentary distraction which Historia caused, allowed Eren to slip his dominant arm out and pummel the opponent above him. Even after two blows, the bear had kept its left limb firmly dug into Eren's flesh. His arm was able to slip through however because of the mud as he dealt an uppercut to the pained beast's jaw. He clobbered the same spot again, barely managing to see as he craned to observe the animal with his right eye. Twice, thrice and again. And again.

It hurt.

It hurt a lot to strain his arms muscles with all his might, deal such a wide blow and receive the impact from hitting the bear's head. His first scraped and started bleeding slightly and two of his nail always cracked. But it didn't matter to Eren, it could easily heal itself later. So he struck and plunged his fist onto the beast's side a sixth time. All his hits were in rapid succession, utilising all the strength available to him through the disadvantageous position he was in, clenching his teeth as he tried to knock the beast above him off even slightly.

Unable to counteract properly and put its prey down, the great bear removed itself from Eren's body and shuffled a few steps to the side, growling at the pain accumulating to the side of its head.

Eren twisted his body as he pulled himself up onto his feet and faced the beast, assessing the
Barely before Eren was able to get into a standing stance, the bear roared and pounced immediately. In response, even with the miniscule amount of space between them, Eren was able to bend his knees faster and throw his wounded body to the side just as the bear thudded into the spot he had just been, merely 3 feet away.

He pushed himself up faster this time, but his legs tangled with the ODM gear's weight on his thighs. The bear faced him again as he crawled and grasped the handles of his gear which had been dispatched and flown around.

He felt like his body was battered everywhere but was still able to function somehow. His left eye had been latched out, and so his vision was halved. And then the bear pounced again, though Eren managed to roll away more easily this time, though the boxes on his sides caused impact to reel through his upper legs. 5 feet away this time, and the bear was already facing him again.

He had to manage somehow, he had to beat this massive beast in front of him. 'Maybe I should transform? No, it's just an animal, I have the means to take it down' Eren's mental thoughts pounded clearly through his head.

To pierce its heart, he would need to cut through the underside, and even then it was difficult to determine where to cut. The neck. Eren decided it was the best place to aim. Breaking through the skull was impossible due to how thin and fragile the blades were. Guns. He cursed himself for rushing out without considering to take guns no matter how suspicious it might have been if they had to pose as civilians.

And then it launched itself completely at him like a boulder flying at him. Eren threw himself again away from the sudden, fast movement. 3 feet away. Eren buckled his knees inwards, forcing them to bend so he could stand and swiftly crossing his arms, holding the handles to equip the blades into them.

His right hand knocked itself into the metal, missing the blade's connecting point in his left box, which instead dug itself into his right index finger.

He had misjudged his aim due to the lack of left eye. He dropped the handle in his right hand and pulled his left arm, unsheathing the remaining blade which had held on inside the right box. He moved his left blade into his right hand and opted for a two handed approach, levelling his eye with the two voidless ones of his enemy.

Then —

The powerful beast moved backwards.

Instead of pouncing it edged itself to wonder back and then start to encircle round him. Perhaps recognising the fact its enemy now held a blade from the bear’s past experiences or maybe just because it realised it's pounces weren't fast enough, it decided to patrol around him.

"Damn you... what are y— argh!" Eren was twisting his body, but then his ankle wound caused him to cry out in anguish. His right shoulder also felt like falling off.

If he focused too much clearly, then he would likely transform. He had to force it down. The will to become a Titan had to be suppressed if he was to bring this to a close quarters combat. He could do it. He killed a Titan with his ODM gear. So a much smaller beast, no mater how fearsome shouldn't be difficult. He had let his guard down, that was why he ended up in such a mess. He
wasn't going to let that happen again.

Eren knew that bears went for the face. He also knew that bears didn't attack humans unless threatened to, but the bleeding on one of the bear's heavy hind legs suggested him the reason.

The bear growled again and stopped its motion, staring back at him. 3 metres away. Steading himself, Eren moved forward, weighing his force on his bleeding ankle just enough to balance without the pain overpowering him and then another step. 2 metres. Man and beast stared into each other. And the man took another step forward and the beast roared again.

Eren steeled himself, positioning his blade at the ready for a diagonal slice. And then steam blinded him. His left eye had started regenerating more rapidly, forcing the steam to envelop his remaining eye partially as he bent his head to redirect the steam.

The bear immediately took notice of his enemy tensing up and roaring, pushed itself forward to cover the distance. But it was hit with two wires which penetrated its hide on its left flank.

Historia had fired the hooks of her ODM gear into the bear, seeing Eren's temporary blindness. He registered the fact immediately, as the bear bellowed in pain and turned itself to Historia at once. He pushed himself forward, crossing the distance and aiming at the bear's neck. It noticed him, and turned to face again, opening its maw as it tried to bite into the brunette.

He winced and tried to reposition himself. No use. Realising the angle could not show itself unless he was to dive directly beneath the beast, he changed his aim and pressed the trigger with his middle finger, firing his left hook into the bear's face. It flew right into the open mouth of the bear and into the side of its throat. The bear bit down from the pain, only just unable to catch a piece of Eren's body.

Eren then pulled his blade down with all his strength with both arms and upper body. It hit the bear on the back of its head, not quite being able to reach the neck region, but —

Historia panting and grasping at breath, pulled the triggers inwards and let a puff of steam out to propel her forward into the bear. She thrust both swords forward as she rammed into the beast, one blade forcing its way through. The other, the one in her left hand, forced impact to reel back right through her arm. It must have hit the bones in a bad way since it didn't travel any deeper and cracked slightly.

The bear flailed wildly, hit almost simultaneously by the two attacks and receiving hits from both, it tried to throw its opponents away. Eren's blade had cut deeply, and seemed to have not quite pierced the skull fatally. The bear managed to land a hit in Eren's gut, knocking his breath out, but immediately recovered having anticipated the hit.

Eren yelled as he brought the blade back up and immediately threw down everything he had onto the bear's neck, again mustering all the strength he needed, knowing this hit would need to go even deeper. This time, the beast squealed in pain as the blade cut 1/3 of the way in, the blood escaping signifying how it was surely a fatal strike as he felt the blade denting the bone inside.

Historia cried out, releasing her blades from the handles just in time to avoid a sweeping claw from the bear. Panic still rained through her eyes and body, as she felt she might succumb back into quivering again. But she pressed in and drew a second pair of blades, as Eren jumped back a little, his blade accidentally cracking off as he tried to take it with him.

She saw where Eren had been aiming, forcing back her momentary doubts, she dove to the side as she held her blades at the ready.
"Don't! Ghrrg, just step back!" Eren yelled across the other side of the struggling beast as it clawed the earth, desperately trying to live. One half of a blade stuck deeply into its neck and two more in its body, along with several other wounds.

She reeled her hooks out, not wanting to get them caught in the bear's last struggle. She breathed deeply, beginning to shiver from the overload of the encounter.

Eren struggled himself other, steam billowing out of his various wounds, mainly the big one on his upper right body which Historia could have sworn she saw the ribs exposed themselves before the skin got repaired. His clothes were a mess. Tattered and bloodied by the wounds which he had received and muddy from the earth he had been grounded into.

He limped over, as the bear's movements weakened as it wept on the ground. Historia was struggling to remain on her feet between witnessing Eren's awful state and the pitiful last cries of the beast. And then the whimpers of one of them stopped, as the beast slumped down and rested its head on the floor.

They both exhaled and inhaled, trying to calm down their raging heartbeats. Watching the beast struggle in pain until the end, Historia wished she could have given it a more merciful death. But it was too late for that.

Eren groaned as his left eye returned, his vision still slightly blurred as the insides structures of the eyes had to readjust. The steam at least from healing wounds on his body dissipated into the air swiftly and would not leave a signal in the sky for all to see.

"Eh... ah, Eren..." Historia's trembling form lowered her blades to the ground as she inched over to him. She had only ever seen Ymir's regenerating body first hand and her wounds had healed at a concerningly slower rate. She could hardly believe Eren was standing after taking such a beating.

Broken ribs, gouged out eye and shredded skin. All of it regenerating ethereally before eyes. Biologically inhuman.

"Ah, I'm sorry! I-I j-just... just..." Historia trembled trying to spell out an excuse. No, that would be what Krista did. Historia is more genuine than that. "I'm sorry... I spaced out... and didn't think I was seeing the reality properly, so um..."

Eren patted his hand on her soldier and gave her a knowing look, telling her he held no grudge against her with his gentle smile. "It's alright. I guess I was rushing us along myself and we ended up tired again from everything that's been going on."

He coughed a little, feeling the blood flow returning through the healed arteries in his right shoulder, giving it full functionality again. The claw scratches across his face closed themselves as he touched his new eye, vision still not fully restored, although it was a lot less clouded now.

"Ah um, here have this," Historia said, about to take off her cloak and give it to her companion.

"No, don't worry about that," Eren responded, peeling off the remains of his clothes. His cloak was completely destroyed, but his waistcoat was still intact, despite the gaping holes and remaining blood in several spots. Historia ignored him and pushed her cloak into his hands. "No really, it's you that should remain hidden."

"And walking around with wounds across your body isn't going to attract more suspicion?" Historia's mind had been set up as she refuted his comment.

"Yes b—" Eren placed the cloak aside immediately.
"Hahaha!" The abhorrent laugh sounded the area as Eren and Historia's attentions were drawn to the people walking out from the same direction as the bear had attacked.

Four men entered the area seemingly out of nowhere, two of them laughing and smirking to themselves while the third was helping the last limping man. The wound on his leg was hastily covered, and still clearly causing the man too much pain to walk on his own. All four of the men had the green and silver emblem of a unicorn stitched into their uniform, denoting their enrolment into the interior military police.

"Well this is our lucky day for sure! Hahah, you have us searching all over for you, so it's a damn nice thing for you to show up without your superiors for us." The first man, an average sized, light brown haired soldier stepped forward merrily. "Oh and thanks for taking care of that as well for us."

The leading soldier gestured to the dead animal laying beside Eren and Historia. Both of them glared at their new enemies, as Eren went to stand in front of Historia. 'Shit, what do we do? We can't let these bastards get away and call in others... I've healed at least now... the pain is still bothering my senses but...’ Eren analysed his new set of opponents. They looked like a single squad. Each of them had a rifle likely loaded. The two men at the back were using them to support each other as they walked.

By comparison, he had a single blade in his left sheath. He had picked up both handles of his gear after the fight with the bear and held onto them instinctively, meaning he could fire either of his hooks. Eren considered his approach, 'Historia has 4 blades left, 2 of them already equipped. My remaining ones which had fallen out are a couple of metres away. So the best course of action is —'

The second man, a particularly chubby MP trained his blade on Eren immediately and called them out immediately. "Drop your ODM gear or you Titan boy can get it first."

The other MPs looked at their chubby comrade, who was smiling in anticipation of the reward they would receive.

"Oi, oi," their leader leaned over and whispered, "aim for the Jaeger boy's legs. We need the Reiss girl unwounded and the Jaeger boy alive."

The two men at the rear, where whispering to each other separately, seemingly in a much less excited mood than the two in front of them. Historia eyed all of them from behind Eren, and she saw the chubby soldier smirk and bring his aim downward.

"Well, get on with it! I'll have yer leg blasted out Titan boy," the brunette MP warned them.

The men clearly weren't the sort to back down from orders, and she prepared herself to follow whatever Eren did. She knew he was far more well-versed in combat than she was, but knowing what she did about him, he would undeniably want to fight back. 'I need to support his back properly this time. I'll go for whichever one of the two in front he doesn't... I'll have to... go for the kill...’ Historia's thoughts considered a fact. She'd never killed anyone before. Not herself at least. Perhaps she killed her mother by existing. But it wasn't by her own hand. Could she do it? Then —

Eren reeled right back to face her, turning 180 degrees completely to face her in the blink of an eye. The movement shocked her as she looked up into his strained eyes, as kneeling down slightly, he thrust both his hands forwards to her hips, Historia only letting out a squeak of surprise "Eh?"

Eren's handles found their way into the ends of the remaining pair of blades Historia had, before
whipping them out from her and turning to use them as his own.

Eren turned back, readying to fire his wires.

But the gunshot rang out first.

The bullet flew right into the heart of the titan shifter, piercing through the protecting bones with a burning crack which blared through the nerves of his body as he collapsed face forward.

It happened fast. Too fast for her to register, as the shooter himself pulled his musket back upwards and as a result, despite the relatively close range, had shot into Eren's heart. Eren had stumbled back a bit from the impact as blood began welling back up in the patch, staining his wrecked shirt even more, before he promptly looked like he lost consciousness and collapsed right in front of Historia.

Historia gapped at the fallen body of her comrade before her. The comrade which she had failed to warn yet again. The comrade which she had failed to cover again. The comrade who she had just decided to depend on the initiative of again.

What was known of Eren's titan ability was naturally shared with her and the others who had been checked and assigned into the new Levi squad. Even in human form, Eren was able to regenerate entire limbs which he had lost, similar to a Titan. He needed to wound himself in order to transform into a Titan after all, and so amongst the squad, any injury to Eren was more or less not treated as an issue when he could recover from it.

However, unlike Titans, Eren would eat when hungry, slept when he was tired and needed to have blood circulating if he were to draw breath. They had never learnt the specifics since they weren't pursuing the field of medicine, but they had been taught how after too much blood loss, soldiers were not able to breathe properly. Eren likely was able to regain blood itself by his Titan power.

But Eren had never taken a shot through the heart before. If the source of circulating blood was taken out, Eren wouldn't be able to breathe. Once someone stopped breathing, their body movements would eventually cease soon after and so they would stop 'living'. If his body stopped living... would that stop his Titan power from working?

So she could only gap at his fallen unmoving body as her body became possessed by fear again. The MPs however, likewise came under this same spell as they realised what the cubby man had just done.

"Shit... oh god, shit... is he actually... no, no, this is... shit... if he's dead then..." their leader began mumbling, panic taking turn over him. The chubby man dropped the rifle, smoke seeping out from the barrel. The two men at the rear, were equally aghast.

"N-no... I-I didn't m-mean to..." the chubby man squawked. Anticipating the inevitable result of what his comrades would do, he backed off shaking.

Historia had collapsed at her feet, one hand reaching out to the motionless body.

And then the light came out and covered all she could see.

---

**Late Spring of the Year 849 - The 2nd Day after Departure**

*Eren and his group woke up promptly on that morning. Eren himself still felt quite tired, not fully recovered from the straining effort he had to put in on the day before just to remain awake. At the*
very least, he felt partially refreshed. The plan was to reach Stohess District by the end of this day. Supplies would last until they got there but they would need to restock afterwards.

A dry wind was blowing through the streets of a seemingly forsaken land. Now that they had a clear visual of the area, Eren noticed how empty the lands sounded. No birds chirping their even music in the thickets, nor wild animals grazing nor scurrying around despite the time of year.

But he didn’t have the time to spare. They needed to reach Jinae as soon as possible. He thanked Marco for sharing some details about his hometown a while ago.

Eren peered back into their tent after he had left to brief in the crisp morning breeze. Bertholdt was still fast asleep, spraying his whole body across the place, hardly leaving space for even one more person inside. Reiner was clearly being stupid if he thought all of them could actually snuggle up in one tent. The very man himself was forced to curl into a ball in the remainder of the space inside.

He woke them both as he then walked over to the girl's tent, intending to wake them up as well. He whispered Annie's name, hoping she at least would be up. There was nothing he could knock against to check if they were awake.

Reiner then knocked him inside as he moved across the camp half asleep. Eren fell face first through the gap as he landed in an incredibly perilous location.

---

Early Fall of the Year 850 - 4 Hours after Eren and Historia encountered the MPs

What would have been a relatively short journey, felt like several magnitudes longer than a mere 40km to Eren and Historia. The set of unforeseeable encounters had caused their sense of time to fade for the rest of the way, and although the journey was estimated to be 40km, it was closer to 38km. The pair waded in their steps as they finally saw the hints of stone resting in the shadows of the night in the limits of their vision.

"Hey, um Historia. Could you do me a favour and just follow a version of the story I will make up?" Eren spoke up as he pulled down his hood.

"Um... yeah okay. Why though? There's no reason to hide anything, is there?" Historia spoke, still feeling rather unsettled.

"We're already going to get criticised for how we acted one way or another. Naturally, we're not going to hide how we met those MPs and my partial transformation when it's a problem for our safety... but I just want to avoid any unnecessary details for people to fuss over later on. If it's alright with you, I... just want to avoid pointless drama," Eren reassured her of not holding any ill intentions.

Historia nodded, uncertain of any other response she could give. Eren finished whispering the sort of story which they would follow just as a figure slowly crept out from behind a tree just a bit ahead of them.

"Ah hey, you guys are... earlier than expected?" Connie, who had been placed on night patrol, called them over as soon as he spotted them. He saw the peculiar state they were both in, and not just how they seemed to be walking almost side by side.

"Connie, I need to report to the captain at once." Eren replied and shuffled his straps off his ODM gear as Connie swiftly nodded, deciding the question of the hole in Eren's shirt was one to be
answered before everyone.

He gestured them over to the entrance and led them, noticing the distant looks both of them held.

She had seen it. Historia had seen it, she was sure of it. Just after that moment, it came. Another brief spark which integrated an image deep in her head.

Pondering the image she saw when touching Eren, she entered through the door behind him.

Welp, sorry for the cliffhanger to what happened between Eren and the MPs, honestly it's just because I had written it last as I wanted to give it some thought and then I go to save and nope! Internet connection is dead so I get an error page, so I go back and the last section I had written is gone! I try re-writing it but I end up over-extending it far far too much and decided to delete it *sigh* so yeah that'll be next chapter since it's a pretty important moment which I want to get right! Sorry again for the late release, if anyone wants to pay a better internet service to me, I'd be eternally grateful lol!

Ending Scene: WARNING MANGA SPOILERS - CONTAINS SPOILERS FOR SEASON 4 (OR WHAT WILL BE SEASON 4 AT LEAST)

The wounded soldier carefully lifted the frail circular glasses off the bridge of his nose and handed them back to its owner, the bearded man who sat opposite him. Although the strength of the spectacles had been adjusted to suit the bearded man, the wounded soldier's recent failing vision was catching up to the poor level of his half brother's.

Thankfully at least, they were not short-sighted and had no problems with most distances on the battlefield. Reading documents and close up distances however, was what they struggled from. Their father had been the same.

"Falco is down with a cold, just so you know. Same as his older brother Colt. Their family doesn't seem too resilient to the rain it would seem." The elder began a more casual conversation.

"I see... He'll be pushing himself to his utmost once he recovers no doubt." The wounded soldier replied, uncertain of how to feel at the kind kid's determination which he played a part in lighting himself.

"Mhmph, he managed to survive against Zofia's unarmed combat abilities yesterday so I can't say over-working is not a factor. It's quite clear who taught him moves like that, and don't worry, Reiner won't notice. He's got talent but still a long way to go," the bearded man waved his arms as he spoke, pronouncing that the wounded soldier had nothing to worry about. He faced the wounded soldier from across a table next to a window before noticing the absolutely still posture he held. "Hm? What's wrong?"

"... your coffee is terrible."

"... you're going to make me cry brother."

The bearded man sighed and searched for an alternative beverage. He then resumed a serious look and talked awhile longer as he concluded the final considerations of the latter parts of their scheme.

"How long do you think it will take to reach t—"

"One day, or two at most. There's a place we can settle ourselves in for whoever long we need. It's
our home after all. So long as there's only a couple of us or so, there's room to manage. Beyond that... there's no way to discover the precise location apart from searching for ourselves,” the wounded soldier cut his elder half-brother off, a common pattern which would happen whenever he would speak about anything relating the slightest to her.

The bearded man scratched his right ear with his left hand, pondering the positive news.

"I still think we should bring His—"

"She'll come with me... Even if things may have become complicated between us, she'll come. I know she will."

The bearded man adjudged his glasses and nodded. After draining the rest of his glass, he concluded the extent of their plans.

"Well then... Let's just hope we can be the ones to end this 2000 year old journey as soon as we can..."
Chapter Summary

Discord invite: https://discord.gg/csQFFUC

For those who are interested, this is a Eren X Historia discord server, though it was made a while ago, it's only started being editing properly a few days ago. So yeah, if you are interested in basically a place to share links, art, ideas, discussions etc for Eren X Historia or Attack on Titan in general, please feel free to join up even if you don't want to say anything and just look around, or share it with anyone else you think might be interested.

Do of course, not invite known trolls or haters if you please! But yeah, the server is currently tiny as you might expect haha, we are few in number when it comes to EreHisu to begin with but you don't need to verify your account or anything, just click outside the box when it asks you to add one after accepting the invite, and your free to explore. You don't have to say anything at all, but it's there if it's of interest to you!

Chapter 4 - Königinnenkäfig

Late Spring of the Year 849 - After Reiner "accidentally" knocked Eren into the girls' tent.

Annie was not having the best of days recently. Her one and only goal was to locate and capture the possessor of the Coordinate. There were so many different things she hated about it all, but she had to do it, and there was no point in sparing thought for when she would return to the world outside until she had actually acquired her objective.

1 million people lived in this land behind the walls. Locating one individual amongst those was near impossible. An enemy which didn't want to be found. The most logical answer was to therefore bait them out.

Annie knew that perfectly well. But she also knew that she was starting to struggle with the means of accomplishing it. Which would win in the end? She would wonder if it was her oath or her guilt which would carry her down in the end.

No, it didn't matter. She had to do whatever it took. She would always erase such thoughts from her head and focus on the flow of the river in front of her. Perhaps she was missing something by simply looking down the flow. It didn't matter. Deception and reconnaissance. Those were her two tasks.

And that was what also put her in a pretty bad mood even by her standards. A full night 3 days ago of no sleep, simply sneaking around the Capitol all night, with a stupidly tough day of training on the following morning after that just yesterday. Most of the cadets had collapsed tired into their bunks as she herself just barely managed to conceal her fatigue and keep her facade up.

Then of all things, just before she could think she might have a decent night's rest for once, her
sleep time is cut in half, and they are forced on the road for the rest of the day. She had no clue how she was able to manage, but as soon as they got in, Annie fell into a deep sleep at once.

She had been awoken by Krista herself when she stumbled in through the low entrance and ended up knocking herself into her a little. Annie’s scowl combined with her sleeping face, promptly terrified the slightly smaller blonde into silence. She was about to whisper her usual string of apologies to her but Annie turned over quickly and nestled back into sleep.

Krista had taken more of the back of the small space they had while Annie had quickly distance herself and placed herself next to the exit. She really just wanted to be left alone in some peace and quiet for now. She was used to doing a couple days without sleep but it still took its toll on her concentration and mood.

And there at last.

A little bit of sleep. She wished she could wrap herself up with something to protect herself and just sleep for a good long while.

At peace.

Until an annoying whisper woke her up instantly. She was always a light sleeper and could only turn to glare at the shadow outside the tent covers

“Hey, Annie. Annie... you awake in there?” It was Eren no doubt since he wasn’t as tall as the other two, though she couldn’t register his voice properly in her half asleep state.

She sighed internally, looking at Krista who was turned away from her. Likely still fast asleep. All the girls seemed to keep their distance from her in the female dormitories for one reason or another. According to Mina, who was about the only one willing to be her ‘bunk beds buddy’ as she called herself, her sleeping face terrified everyone.

Good. It would keep them away from her. Well, most of them. To one suicidal maniac, it didn’t seem to matt—

The brunette in question fell right through the covers, pulling them open with his falling weight before tumbling right inside. The tent was small after all and even though Annie has made sure to distance herself away from Krista on the other end as much as she could, it was still not much less than 1/2 a metre between them.

That’s why when Eren fell tumbling in, he basically tripped over Annie’s sitting up, and fell flat with his upper body and arms falling right over the still asleep Krista and kicking his head into the ground just over her.

They had naturally laid down blankets over the ground they were sleeping on, however it could only cover so much of the space, and in her sleep Krista had grasped at it and snuggled every peace of clothing she had into her sleep. As a result, Eren’s face collided with the dry soil with his nose taking the blunt of the hit and giving him a short concussion.

“AH?! E-Eren?!” Krista yelped, woken up from yet another dreamless sleep, she found herself being crushed by her fellow trainee.

Eren coughed as he placed his arms down to support himself up, feeling dizzy as he turned to his left slightly and saw the gentle face of the blonde. He also found his left arm was tangled in her medium length hair, having not been able to register where he placed his hands when he lifted himself. He was at least thankful in his half daze that his other arm was not in a worse spot.
"Jaeger! Get your lower midssection off me." Annie was not in the least bit amused as Eren jumped in fright and pulled himself away from his position on top of the two blondes.

"Ah! A-Annie this wasn't inten—" Eren managed after he removed himself from Krista, heat rising to his head as to where he exactly was. Annie seemed to be fuming as she swiftly clothed herself with her military jacket which she had been using as her pillow.

"Don't panic everyone! Officer Braun is here, and has come to arrest the fiend who would dare to peep at t—" Reiner, just before he managed to poke his head inside, was swiftly brought to her knees by Annie's roundhouse kick. His head before even being able to look up was swiftly pressed down into the ground by Annie's foot.

Struggling but unable to escape from looking down at the ground, he consigned himself to his fate. Annie then turned to Eren who was averting his eyes away anywhere, before deciding to fix his attention on the top of Reiner's head with Annie's foot on top of this.

Annie huffed, before ordering "Jaeger, don't you dare move. You, start moving your ass back out now."

Reiner complied, crawling backwards out swiftly, with Annie's foot on top the whole time. In a matter of seconds Annie and Reiner where out with Reiner letting out a cry of agony outside.

Eren as told to do so, was not moving an inch, knowing that the question of whether he would have a bruised and beaten body for the rest of the day or not, was hanging in the balance.

Krista was panicking. She had half the mind to try and stop whatever Annie was doing to Reiner, but half the intention of just trying to stay out of Eren's attention like she was going to do for the duration of the trip. She shoved her boots back in and checked her buttons were all done up.

Right now, it was just Eren and Krista in the tent alone, and Reiner's yells outside. And the sound of things braking. That was also outside.

She clicked her belts close and tightened them as she equipped her ODM gear again. The silence was unbecoming and did not help Krista's concentration as she fixed the belts around her properly. She could feel the rush of blood in her face and guessed that Eren was feeling no less embarrassed. She was about to leave when Annie crouched back inside and fixed Eren a look. "Listen, Ann— "

"Eren." Annie had cut him off with a surprisingly soft tone and reached into her belongings in the corner as she pulled out a cloth and threw it to him. "You're nose is bleeding."

He caught it easily. Eren was rather surprised that he had been promoted back from 'Jaeger' to 'Eren' but sincerely grateful. Then he felt surprised by Annie's consideration when he hadn't even noticed the thin trail of blood. A few droplets had already seeped under his lip, giving him the unpleasant taste of rusted iron.

Annie in the meantime sat perpendicular to him as she fitted her boots on securely. Krista watched the scene unfold, uncertain of herself when she hadn't even thought of seeing to Eren. She had noticed he was bleeding, yet didn't feel any urge to help.

"Uhh.. here, thanks Annie." Eren handed the piece of cloth back after he had scrunched up his nose and checked he hadn't missed anything. Annie returned her deadpan stare, clearing telling him that she didn't want it back, as Eren began to sweat nervously again.

"Now, listen Eren," Annie said. She got up and unsealed the cover of the entrance again, "keep the idiot in check and don't let him pull you in on anything, alright?"
Eren got up and nodded firmly, but did not leave at once. He was surprised that this was it. He had once seen the other trainees in his division who he didn't know, come back with twisted limbs and a face full of beatings. It's not like he had any interest in fooling around with the other trainees, but he heard how Mikasa and Annie were the two you didn't want to catch you.

"What? Get going. It's not like you were trying to sneak in, was it?" Annie began losing her patience. Although seeing the naked bodies of the opposite sex was not something uncommon, there was a much greater sense of discipline in the military on what was classed as indecency and lack of respect.

"Ah, right. T-thanks for understanding Annie. And I'm sorry anyway Annie." Eren nodded and sighed in relief before leaving promptly. Only after considering how he didn't offer Krista any apology.


While being distracted, Krista soon popped out from under and knocked into Eren. They both whirled round to face each other and stared, uncertain of what to say.

Eren gaped at her, unable to conjure up an apology and Krista felt equally awkward as she turned without a word and tried to make herself as small as possible as she scurried over to get to work.

He scratched the back of his head, as he proceeded to do the same, wishing he had said something to quell whatever Krista was thinking. He only hoped this wouldn't continue for the rest of the day.

Annie had been left alone once Krista had gone. She cursed under her breath for Reiner's stupidity as she examined the slip he had intended to give her.

Place and time for the next meeting. Of course they would make sure to convene when they had an opportunity like this and discuss without the need to be on the lookout for the training camp patrols.

They only needed to not cause suspicion from Eren and Krista, and they would be fine.

Reiner had done this sort of thing in the past. They didn't want any signs of Annie communicating with Reiner and Bertholdt of course, but there were many other ways they could slip messages between each other. Yet Reiner insisted on him using the pretext of peeing on the girls for much of the time. She cursed him again.

A stupid act thrown up with unnecessary complications which always resulted with Annie having to see him at the door, kick his ass out and convince the others not to report him to the instructor. Pointless effort. Was he trying to annoy her on purpose?

No. Annie knew it. Bertholdt did as well. Reiner had grown far too connected. They were managing to hold it out. But Reiner believed he was one of them. A soldier. Did he like it when the other boys laughed along with him about his pointless play. Did he like it when the girls would glare and forgive him when he apologised on the next day. Did he like it because...

Yes. That was it. Annie knew why.

She fastened her ODM gear completely as she left for another day of ... this life. She knew that all three of them were roping themselves to this place. They had to see it through to the end. She could only hope they would before the ropes which bound them tightened into nooses around their necks.
They were already walking on the creaking ground of the gallows...

Early Fall of the Year 850 - Near Midnight just after Eren and Historia's Arrival

Eren remembered that journey rather well in particular, amongst all his others.

"So basically, you ended up transforming into your partial Titan form when one of the MPs shot at you. You managed to land a hit on two of them, before the other two took their comrades and fled. You are certain the steam wasn't thick enough to alert anymore MPs but as a precaution, you decided to make a detour with your ODM gear to be safe. However since one of yours had been damaged in the process, you both used one while you carried Historia. And this all happened just after you left your original hideout?" Levi summarised what Eren had told him.

"Yes, that's right... I'm sorry sir," Eren confirmed the captain's summary, feeling guilty of acting too hastily.

"After that you lost your way and ended up late as a result since you didn't decide to proceed here immediately like you were told. And the multiple cuts in your clothes? That's not something that just happens." The captain commented.

Mikasa was tending to Eren, scurrying all over him as she checked that he wasn't wounded. As soon as he had gone through the door, Mikasa had grabbed Eren and began mothering over him.

"I... ended up falling once and hit myself through several branches." Eren thought up on the spot.

"Eren! You're bones could have been broken, are you sure they can mend properly?" Mikasa was doing as typical of her. The last thing she needed to know was that he had been thrown and crashed around by a dying bear in its last moments, before having a hole blown into his heart literally.

That, and he didn't want the captain or any of the Survey Corps for that matter, to hear that he could recover a hit into his key organ. It's not that he didn't trust them, it was just that he didn't want to start having his human body tested.

It hurt. It hurt when he had taken every hit, but he had been able to endure. It could certainly play its part in the interests of time if they managed to establish the extent of Eren's regeneration power. But he didn't want to experiment on his human body.

"Well, whatever it's not the time for that right now," Levi said, "patrols, make sure you do your job properly but we'll be finished here by morning."

His superior left to go downstairs. Eren was surprised at how readily accepted his story was. Perhaps he was just that trusted now? He felt a bit guilty if that was the case.

Eren sighed and leaned back against the wall as Mikasa kept being more touchy and feely than usual. He felt bad for always yelling at her in the past for doing this, but he still felt annoyed regardless. He turned his gaze towards his best friend who was sitting at the table.

"Hey... Armin what's wrong?" Eren spoke, concerned for the light whimpering of his best friend. Jean was leaning over him, hand on Armin's shoulder, trying to comfort the sniffling blond. Sasha on the other hand was trying to hold back her laughter out of pity.

"He had an encounter with the wrong sort of bastard." Jean answered in his place as he lightly glared at Sasha to quieten down. "Let's just leave it at that."
"Ah..." Eren was glad that at least that he seemed relatively alright. He was pretty concerned when Armin had been picked as Historia's double, but he could picture what could have happened.

He walked over and took a seat opposite his best friend, next to Historia who was sitting on the edge.

He accidentally knocked knees with her, though Eren didn't notice. Historia jumped a little backwards but thankfully nobody took notice.

"So um, guys. What exactly did go wrong?" Eren asked, knowing that For a while nobody spoke. Some of them traded glances amongst each other, which Eren followed to the main partaker between these exchanges. Mikasa.

"Mikasa... what exactly happened?" She looked pretty upset with herself already and could not manage to look at him when he called her name.

"It was... nothing... I just messed up."

"What do you mean?" Eren sighed, seeing that Mikasa did not want to respond, he turned to Armin as he spoke.

"It was... just a small accident. We were successful in capturing the boss of the Reeves Company without being followed and the Captain was able to make a deal with them." Armin paused and decided that Hanji would soon divulge the contents of their conditions when she finishes their job. "We tried to capture two men from the central military police who have been after you, and the Reeves company managed to trick those two into being taken in a carriage."

Eren nodded along, not seeing how Mikasa fit in? Armin continued his account.

"We had to lead them up a cliff and had to fake the fall, otherwise the Reeves company would fall under suspicion if they disappeared on the road. And then... well... it worked to get the carriage to fall down the cliff and the two men fell in the river, and then..."

The young blond looked over to Mikasa, wishing that she would continue. Eren followed and also awaited Mikasa to continue the account.

Half a minute passed and Eren soon grew impatient. Turning back to Armin he said, "hey, come on, tell me what happ—"

"It's because I had asked section commander Hanji to let me handle the capture of one of the members of the First Squad. I wanted to get the job over done as quickly as I could." Mikasa took over, looking incredibly reluctant. "But I underestimated the timing and my MP target got washed away too quickly by the current."

"Huh? You... Mikasa?" Eren was beyond surprised. Here he had only ever witnessed Mikasa excel, especially on a combat aspect.

"Hey, it's no big deal right Mikasa? That sort of thing requires experience and... um you just let yourself be distracted for the day..." Armin rushed to reassure the dark haired teen.

Mikasa clearly looked more than a little taken by her mistake. Not wishing to divulge the truth of one of her first mistakes.

"Right I see..." Eren simply offered. He didn't know what else to say. Everyone had been delayed as they had to track down the second member of the first squad who went by the name of Ralph.
But everyone was alright. That's all that mattered. For one reason or another, they had messed up in some form.

But they were alright. He was surprised, but content that his bad feelings had not come to fruition.

He sat there amongst everyone, with the exception of Mikasa who was leaning against the wall alone, no doubt beating herself inside for her mistake.

But Eren knew Mikasa would persevere. This was surely just a one off chance. Armin had suppressed his discomfort and buried the memory away.

All was much more at peace, as Eren became drawn to the weight on his neck again.

He pulled out the key from under his shirt, still hanging from his neck as always since his father disappeared. The key to a place which he was promised would give him an answer.

He studied it, just as he often would, but he was never able to accomplish anything by doing so. Yet... he still felt a need to do so. Over time, it had become a habit to just occasionally pull the heavy weight connected by the weathered thread to his eyes and just... watch it. Hoping for something, anything.

The nature of the Titans. The origins of the Titans. The purpose of the Titans. 'It has to be there... it has to... so why did you entrusted this to only me? Because I have the Titan power? Ah, I'm going round in circles again...?' Eren thought back on the times he spent with his father. He remembered how his father was often busy with his work, as expected of a doctor.

He didn't really know him all that well. Eren never asked after all. Perhaps things would have been different if he did. But it would have to wait until their next meeting.

Now he was stuck in a loop. Going around in circles around the whole problem. Like giant snake that wrapped itself round the world completely as it searched for a solution. Round and round it would slither, having nowhere else to go.

... Where did that image come from?

Once more his thoughts circle round and once again, he has gained nothing from staring at the key he was left with. Yet the urge to just do so did not fade.

Round and round the world again. And again.

He realised that someone was peeking at him. Historia's eyes drilled into the key. Eren suspected it was a peculiar thing to be doing at this time. He tucked it back in behind his new shirt.

Historia looked away, knowing he must have took notice. But the key remained in her head.

The key amidst the flashing which she saw wrapped around a woman. Fairly long blonde hair and dead blue eyes.

She wondered who that woman was.

And then the shrieks and screams from downstairs began. It reminded her of what truly happened, just yesterday night.

---

*Early Fall of the Year 850 - The Bleak and Sunless Dusk of the Start of Yesterday's Night*
For a moment, and just in that moment, a brief spark was emitted through his mind. And a memory drowned his vision for a brief instance in a timeless place. He could have sworn he was travelling down a long road, or rather an endless one.

There.

Beyond the grassy hills and little rivers, and past the city of light and the desolate wastelands. Around the waters that glowed like fire, the sand dunes and tropical forests.

But just before the frozen tundra that stretched to the sky, the silent lakes and the great mountains that took days to climb.

There. Right there, at the border of the woods. He felt like he could go anywhere, yet he had decided to go there.

There was no tunnel with light at the end of it for him, contrary to the some of the stories the patients of his father had said when he had once asked about death, just before his mother scolded them both for talking about such things... No... why was his mother scolding at him while he read the newspaper and his child self was pouting... no matter...

Instead of that tunnel, he only saw the light, all around him. When he actually looked at it properly, it wasn't actually light, just pure white billows of clouds. Clean blankets the colour of snow that concealed everything around him except for the road ahead of him that led to those woods.

Perhaps fog would be the best thing to call it, but he thought he heard somewhere that fog my nature was clouds which formed on the surface. The scene he was going through felt more as if the clouds had fallen down from the sky with the sole intention of hiding the world from him.

On some days, the sky would be absolutely clear light blue, and on others completely painted in white. On most days however, it would be littered by the clumps and streams of cloud.

All sorts of shapes and lengths. Sometimes he couldn't tell where they started and where they ended. Should he perhaps sit down and watch them pass until he saw the ends of them, or go after them and see for himself?

He felt like seeing it. Chasing the clouds in the sky. It was the sort of things which young children might do, yet it had never interested him back then. Staring up and watching them was good enough. But right now, he decided to do it. He couldn't be content anymore at just looking up at them like he did in the past.

He wanted to go as far as he could as he chased it, even if it disappeared off the horizon, he decided he would wait for it to appear again. He could envision everything clearly now. The billows of snow white were in the sky above him again where they belonged.

He was looking up at them, some colliding and covering over due to the different heights they floated upon. And some were alone in the blue sky. The area around them clear of anything else.

Ordinary. Surely it would be seen as just an ordinary day for the sky. Except one of those clouds was floating the opposite direction to all the rest. He knew that the blankets of steam were moved by the winds, which took them on a journey of their own accord.

A different and separate current of the wind must have been pushing it against the cloud's will into the opposite direction, straight ahead into a thicker mesh of more white billows.

Pure white, whiter than the snow and as bright as the starlight in the night sky.
It was bigger of course than the lamps in the darkness of the night, but now quite the size of the area of the sun.

A pure white blanket of a shape he couldn't quite decipher, yet felt something resembling familiarity in it.

'I'll head for that cloud. I'll head for that cloud and never stop going.' The sound of his thoughts felt like they were being spoken by the world around him.

His body felt really heavy. Heavy, or rather sluggish. He had only taken a couple of steps but he felt tired. It would be alright to rest for a bit, what he decided. He blinked and the cloud was already escaping into the horizon. No, rather, it was stretching itself into the horizon, it's end almost out of it his site, becoming more like a wisp growing ever fainter. He needed to catch up to it now.

"This is the..."

One end of it however, had not moved from where he first saw it, the wind had merely stretched it out somehow as if trying to convey an undecipherable message in the sky again.

"How could this be..."

How could this be the beginning of a passing cloud? This is the end of the clouds outstretching journey. This isn't a cloud. There is no cloud with a blanket of light, there never was. It was an illusion.

It was always going to be impossible to chase a cloud across the sky from start to finish. His bones hurt, shaking within his flesh. His legs were sunk into the ground of nothingness. That wasn't good enough. He could never even begin to start an impossible chase if he couldn't even move. He can't do this himself. Had he ever accomplished anything by himself, not as far as he or the world around him could tell.

"Even... even if I chase after that cloud on my own, and I happen across the destination I am looking for... it's meaningless, isn't it?" He had always run ahead alone, chasing after something while he left everyone else behind.

"Is this the conclusion that's been waiting for me? ... Is this how it'll ends? ... Will I turn out... just that worthless?" The judgement passed on to him for following his own dreams and leaving everyone else behind. Was this the punishment for trying to do something himself? A price for the selfishness of wanting to accomplish something on his own? To prove his own value to himself? "...

A hand was stretching out to him. Had it always been there in front of him?

Both rough and gentle, worn down from the years of military experience yet still remaining tender all the same.

Armin and Mikasa. His two precious friends. The ones he had been the longest with. He cared for them both. And he would always protect them. That's why he would always run on ahead without them, after the enemies which threatened them. But —

Someone who believed in him.

Because they were friends. And because they had nobody else anymore. Even if it was against
their wishes, he would do it again. Because he had to fight. And he would always return back to them. And some day, he would pave the path forward. He would go with Armin outside the wall, to their shared destination. And Mikasa would follow, to be with her 'family'. Because they were friends. But —

Someone who believed in him.

They didn't believe in him. Eren knew it. He had always held that suspicion but he felt he knew it know. He believed in them. So... why did Mikasa always try to stop him, to tell him to let go of his dream and live out beside a warm hearth until the day he died. Why did Armin always try to hold him back, and tell him to follow behind the military's wishes. The dream he had. The place.. over **there**. He dreamt that it was **there** in that place beyond the walls. It had to be. He wanted to go there. He had to. Why did Mikasa always try to coerce him to give up. Why did Armin always stop him when trying to chase after the enemy. He knew why. They were friends of course... But —

Someone who believed in him.

He wanted someone who would believe in him. He didn't mean someone who trusted him to come out on top in a fight when it was his turn to fight. He wanted someone who would believe in "Eren" himself.

The outreaching hand was still there. Beckoning him to take it. The person behind it whispered.

That voice. He'd heard it before.

"You're going to exterminate every last Titan right?"

It was a man's voice. Who was that?

"I know you can do it. I can see it in you..."

The voice of the only person he had ever seen as his hero.

He didn't want to admit it. But he knew deep inside that those moments he had spent with him was the real Reiner talking.

It hadn't been an act, nor some sort of mental issue or whatever else had been going through their heads. It was like Bertholdt said while holding him on his back. He could see it Reiner as well.

He could see that Reiner believed in him.

The first person to ever believe in him.

He grasped the hand in front of him as the older blond pulled him up and disappeared just as his contempt for this man resurfaced, wanting to crush him to the ground.

Where was he going again earlier? He had already forgotten. He thought he remembered staring up at the sky, looking at something, but amongst all the various impossible changes of scenery, he had forgotten.

Instead he was now looking at over the wall and across the ocean. it had to be there... it had to...

"You will be the one to avenge the mother."

He could hear his father's voice as his consciousness soared across the sky.
"You and only you."

He was still mad at his father for leaving.

"You cannot forget the key. No matter what, you must reach it. It's the way to the truth! One day you'll understand!"

But more than that, he wanted to believe his last words.

"Listen to me. It's vital that you keep this key on you at all times. Whenever you look at it, let this thought flood over you. I must return to that cellar."

Yet he felt he couldn't fully come to terms with his father's wishes.

"I'm going to give you something that will make you forget for the time being. I'm sorry. I wish there was more time to explain this. When the time comes, know that you must reclaim Wall Maria and head for the cellar."

But the place his father wanted him to stop by was along the way. At the wall of Shinganshina District which he could see now.

"It will be a hard and merciless road, but in my heart I know what I'm doing for the best. When the ability confuses you, let their memories act as your guide."

What memories? Eren had no idea. Something caught his attention. He thought he could see something large on top of the wall right above the gate destroyed by the Armoured Titan.

"Eren, one day the truth will come out. I swear to you."

It was... like a giant ape. Was this the Beast Titan?

"Your journey will be a painful one, but it is yours to make."

There. On its back just leaving the nape. Who was that? It looked like...

"If you want to save Mikasa, Armin and the others, you'll have to control this power!"

One of the keys to his future.

"Shit... WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!" The leader of the group of MPs, turned to his chubby partner and screamed in his face as the latter collapsed before him trembling.

"WE WENT THROUGH ALL THAT TROUBLE FOR 2 GODDAMN WEEKS AND THIS IS HOW IT TURNS OUT WITH ONE OF THE TARGETS INSTANTLY DEAD BEFORE US?!!"

The MPs had began fighting amongst themselves, turning their focus away from Historia. Now would be the best time for her to attack. One of the men were wounded seemingly unable to walk properly. His support hadn't cocked his gun properly and was bubbling with anger as well.

"M-maybe h-he's not dead? We g-gotta check first right? He... he could be al-alright?" The chubby one grasped.

He had dropped his gun and was backing away from their leader in fear who had his back turned. The brown haired leader was forcing his gun barrel towards the chubby soldier.
The distance was a bit too much to gamble on hitting them with the wires. The humans weren't as easy to hit since they were not as large as the beast. The best option would be to propel herself with just the gas and cut them down. Slit their throats. Just like she had seen her mother be killed by.

But such thoughts did not flow through Historia's head. Subconsciously she registered this, but her mind was completely turned elsewhere. To the boy collapsed on the ground in front of her, bleeding profusely from the left side of his chest.

She was touching that wound, checking, hoping that it hadn't hit his vital spot. It surely must have missed his heart, the bullet hole was slightly too high up. Yet the wound had spread across his back far too much to tell anymore.

What had that been?

The instance she touched that wound, she had felt something. She saw a light spark of light flickering images through her. She had seen —

"Hey Morgan, it was your idea to piss of that beast you know," the wounded soldier overcame his disbelief and joined with his leader against the chubby soldier 'Morgan', "it was all your clever idea of thinking a bear would just sniff them out for us. It's already cost me my leg!"

"Wh- g-guys, c-come on it worked d-didn't it?!" Morgan was in a state of panic, seeing where this was heading.

"Yeah, you're little success got to yer head didn't it?! You were thinking to yourself that just because your little idea got us results, you were hoping you could get the most credit, weren't you?!" The leader spoke and pummelled the chubby MP to the ground. "Well, joke's on you! YOU JUST KILLED THE GUY JUST LIKE YOU KILLED THAT PASSERBY WHO WASN'T EVEN A TARGET LAST MONTH! What's with ya? You get all skilled whenever it comes to shooting people!"

"W...why are you still g-going on about that, I..." The man was on the floor, holding his hand out to try and protect himself.

Historia prepared herself. She knew she had to do something. And she had to act on it this time. She shuffled a step forward, hoping to get as close to the 4 MPs as possible. There was the gun which the chubby MP had dropped. If she could — No. It's already been fired. She would need to reload it.

Suddenly, she felt a hand on her ankle which made her gasp. She turned down to see Eren's hand extending out to her with his face turned to the side. He brought his arm back and one finger to his lips, signalling her to be silent.

Historia nodded in disbelief, relief pumping through her. She stood at the ready, turning to watch her enemies.

"H-hey guys, why d-don't we — " All four of the men were preoccupied between themselves.

A flash of light roared out in sparks as Eren stood up, and summoned a part of his Titan form as he threw his hand out.

A part of his Titan formed itself out from the air. Sucking in water vapour and other concentrations of substances it needed to take form as a Titan's hand formed around Eren's own right hand and body.
The arm was long enough to just reach above the MPs as it clasped down instantly on top of him, crushing him into the ground.

The other 3 screamed at the sudden appearance as Eren stood on his knees, Titan arm outcropping from a half upper torso of a Titan, which his hand was connected inside.

In the past, he had transformed twice in a similar manner, creating only pieces which he really needed. It felt a lot heavier to move his arm than in his full Titan body. But he knew what he had to do.

The will to transform had triggered as soon as he pictured what he needed. He coughed out blood which had gotten into his system after he had been shot. The hole felt like it was still there in his heart, and the rib broken from the shot.

It was an experienced hit. The man who shot him must have done this a lot, whether in practise or in secret. It didn't matter right now.

He clenched his teeth as he immediately backhanded the two soldiers supporting each other a few metres away.

They didn't manage to dodge in time or aim properly, as they were blown back across the road.

Exhausted. He felt exhausted after just swinging his arm like that. His body wasn't in a good state. But there was only one left. The man who had been called Morgan.

He turned his head back, searching the area. And found the barrel of a gun in his face.

Morgan must have used that short amount of time to crouch and run over to his close quarters, taking the gun of his crushed leader with him.

The chubby man was sweating profusely. But he had a toying smile on his race as well. His build betrayed his true speed. Eren realised he would be forced to escape his Titan form. No, maybe he could use the fact they can't kill him to his advantage —

"H-Hahah, you're gonna pay, who gives two shits about our orders now!" Morgan cocked his gun and aimed into Eren's gapping head at point blank. Eren immediately tried throwing his Titan arm back round. He would be too late. He had to swing his arm about 150 degrees anti-clockwise to block the hit.

The shot fired as it penetrated into Eren's left shoulder.

"Gha—! You... little bit—" The MP soldier gasped as Historia stabbed into him. She had hit the side of his stomach with her right blade, and managed to make the shot miss from Eren's brain.

And she stabbed again, with her left blade. She cut into the large stomach of the man again, who screamed in pain and began wheezing. Had she hit the vitals?

Historia thought she had... But the man was still gasping for life as he bent on one knee. He then reached and grabbed her right hand.

"Uh?!!" Historia gasped as the man pulled her down towards him, losing her grip on the blade. She had gotten too close to him, and not proceeded to withdraw her blades.

Morgan fought back against the pain as he glared into the blonde and brought his right hand up in a fist, intending to crush the girl's head into the floor. Historia trained her eyes on the oncoming first,
preparing to take the blunt of the hit. The man was trying to take him down with her. She gazed into the mad filled eyes, seemingly grasping at something.

The man who was about to kill her looked like he was going to accomplish something before dying himself. She didn't know this man or anything about him. But his bloodshot and grasping eyes, made her feel a little envious. This man, just like everyone else, saw something.

Whatever it was, they could move forward to it while she was left in an empty world. She had to move forward as well, is what she thought just before the first was about to make contact.

Before it could however, the chubby man had his throat cut with a blade. The pattern of a sword belonging to the ODM gear. Then Eren came charging as he through himself at Morgan and pushed him off.

The chubby man was dead before he hit the ground.

Eren had left his Titan body, as it instantly began to vanish into smoke, and checked the surroundings again.

There were only these four men. The carcasses of two beasts and four corpses. The brown haired leader of the group was dead for sure. His blood staining the ground and his legs turned into the opposite directions. The other two men weren't moving either but he could be sure. It was dark after all and the only source of light was the moon which at least illuminated a fair amount of the area. Frankly he was surprised he could see so far.

... He felt like he could see lights himself. Lights that made people look like they shine. Except the only ones who were shining now we're him and Historia. But before... He thought like he could see the lights shining off all the men... Back when they were alive. The dying bear had likewise shone though it's light was far less brighter.

He shook himself again, registering all the various pains and wounds in his body. A sixth sense which he had? He discarded it as a silly thought.

"Sorry... I... took so long..." Eren gasped as he approached Historia first, checking on her. "You... did... No, thanks for saving me there Historia."

His companion was staring at her blade, coloured with a second paint of blood. She had first thought it was Eren who slit the throat of the last man. But she realised it was her. She must have subconsciously pulled out the blade and stabbed the man in the throat.

Well of course that was what happened. There wasn't really any other explanation when the evidence was there. Yet Historia still found herself looking disbelieving lay at it.

"Are you alright?" Eren asked, kneeling next to her, placing a hand in her shoulder as she looked up.

"... Is it... supposed to feel like this..." Historia mumbled, thinking at how steady her nerves felt. Her first human kill. She remembered how all the stories told of how killing was bad. Yet the characters in it would still do it since apparently in some cases it was good when fighting against an evil person.

Was that what she had done? ... She didn't know why she had done it at all. But she didn't think she did it because it felt like the right think to do.

"How... does it feel for you?" Eren asked, remembering the first time it did for him.
"... Nothing... I don't feel anything..." She replied, sky blue eyes staring into emerald green, telling them of the truth in her words. "... Shouldn't I... be feeling bad for it?"

"Well, it's like that for some people." Eren got up, watching the steam from his decaying Titan vanish into the early night, leaving no sign of a signal from afar. "It was like that for me as well... when I put down those mad dogs... I felt nothing... nothing at all..."

"... I see..." Historia didn't know what to make of this. Was she being told it's okay if she feels nothing? The world around her was empty.

It was no more emptier than before when that man had been alive.

She just didn't feel anything. Except... the look in the MP's eyes as he threw his last hit...

She heard the scrunching of footsteps across the ground, as Eren walked over, limping to the two men he had knocked a way away. He bent down to each of them checking.

All dead. The impact had snapped both of their necks as it caught them at a critical angle. Eren went over to the first man, their leader, the one who was dead for sure.

He grappled him by the legs and pulled him closer to the river bank, off the road, and laid it down near to the dead bear as Historia managed to get on her feet.

She watched him limp and wood, steam flowing out of him. His clothes were an absolute mess of torn rags, impossible to identify the clothes he had previous worn.

"... What do we do now?" Historia turned to Eren, asking him for guidance. She was concerned for the wounds in his body, but somehow... somehow she felt perplexed by his power.

Regeneration. There were limits to his power as Eren said. But he had taken a hit into his chest. Had it missed the heart? The hole in clothing said otherwise.

But more than that, she was perplexed at how Eren had fought. He seemed a lot smarter than people gave him credit for. He hadn't responded immediately to his surroundings, and had let his guard down at first, but his initiative quickly made up for it.

They had survived after all. And it was all thanks to how Eren had reacted. He understood what needed to be done at an instance, and tried. He didn't seem to execute everything he had wanted properly, but he had managed.

"Well... If it's alright, mind if I rest... for a minute..." Eren spoke, crouching and sitting down against the fallen tree which he had initially been sitting on. He sighed as he looked at the scene.

The blades on the floor in front of him had been crushed, likely soon after when they had first fallen out.

He could at least be rest assured that in the night, the steam from his Titan form hadn't reached far nor was it particularly visible. He looked around as Historia strolled over to him and sat beside him, not saying a word.

"There's no need to do anything right now. We'll likely be executing the plan tomorrow or the day after, and this road isn't particularly frequented from the reports," Eren recited the chain of thoughts in his head, "if someone came across this, then they would think the two parties got into a fight and killed each other off. So long as we leave behind one of our ODM gears, it would look convincing with the blade marks... aside from well..."
He turned his focus as he got up and walked over to the man called Morgan. He pulled the remaining blade out which Historia had detached and had been left in his stomach.

He dropped it on the side away from him. And dropped off his mess of an ODM gear, releasing the weight.

"Now it'll look like only one of them had ODM gear this way... though if a doctor examined this guy, he'll know it weren't claws that killed him..." Eren trailed on, not wishing for Historia to dwell on what she had done. "But... something like this won't be reported instantly... and even then if we are lucky, they might suspect an in group betrayal of some sort.

He sat back at his original spot and sighed, cursing their luck once more. The soldiers had been a lot more easier to take care off since they were the ones unexpecting this time. He and Historia could have died several times.

He could have taken the hits naturally, however he had also been gambling each move with a comrade's life in the balance. He hadn't been focus groups close enough attention to her, instead taken on wiping out the threats before him.

That was why he always would chase after his enemies ahead alone. To fight them on one battlefield, for just him and them, everyone else safe, away from them. But he knew he learnt he couldn't beat every enemy he faced alone. He needed to believe in his comrades.

It wasn't merely a choice of believing in either himself or his comrades. It could be a question of both.

Next time. He needed to be better next time.

"Alright, Historia, could you please lend me your ODM gear?" Eren decided, and Historia complied immediately. Stripping off the straps which held it together and passed them other to Eren. Out of the two of them, it would probably be best if Eren was the one who had it equipped.

Historia also gave him her cloak, mostly untattered as Eren wrapped it around himself. His body ached and sagged as he stood.

"... Maybe, um... you should rest first?" Historia stated, clearly seeing the toll on his body.

"No, let's... just get out of here." Eren answered and begin leading them away again. Historia followed. Perhaps she should really encourage him to stop and let her examine his wounds first? Perhaps refuse to go any further until he had?

No... That's something too Krista like for her.

'Should I... maybe...' She thought, trying a desperate attempt to convey something. She wanted to make sure Eren was okay right now, after all they had both just saved each others' necks.

The contents of light made her halt in her thoughts. They made her unable to think otherwise.

So she didn't say anything for much of the journey as before. Neither did he.

She just followed him. Growing ever perplexed by him.

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 – The Morning After**
"Just um, how long exactly were you wandering outside the walls for?" That figure. It was Bertholdt.

"Oh about 60 years. Every day spent felt like an unending nightmare..." The other was Ymir.

Eren shot up from bed as he awoke from recalling the memory. The sun was only just rising now, bringing light creeping through the window, the crate which Armin was as he sitting on partially blocked the view.

"Hm? You don't need to wake up yet." Jean still hazy from sleep, reassured him as he sat up from laying beside the brunette. Armin had ended up dozing off on his watch as he regained himself.

"... That's it. Before I forget." Keeping the memory in check, Eren simply stated before he jumped and run down the wooden stairs, three steps at a time.

Jean and Armin shared a look, not knowing what to make of this. The results of the torture would no doubt be released soon, so they both reluctantly got themselves up.

Eren rushed into the empty ground floor and searched frantically for some paper and ink. Everything. Everything he could remember from that day in the forest of giant trees, just as he lost consciousness.

He needed to write it all down and pass it off to Hanji. What had triggered these memories now? He felt like he was having a stream of them recently.

".. Eren?" He heard a voice behind me and turned to find a tired Historia looking at him curiously. She looked tired, as had he been from what had happened yesterday. She yawned gently, and rubbed one of her eyes with her sleeve as she thought back the tiredness.

"Ah, morning Historia. Sorry, I'm a little busy right now." He turned back to the task at hand.

"Oh ok..." She stayed there, watching him hastily scribble notes down furiously, causing the desk he was leaning on to shake violently. She had wanted to ask him about something. That image that flashed through her when she touched him as he lay sprawled out on the ground.

Eren finished up quickly, not bothering to put the quill back into it's spot, he proceeded out through the back door, down to the cellar where Hanji was torturing the MPs they had captured.

An empty room again. He hadn't even bothered to close the door, almost as if inviting her to follow him.

But she felt it would be best to step aside for now. She turned round, soft feet patting against the unrefined stone floor. The quill on the desk in front of her was put to the side when Eren had rushed away. She felt the need to return it back to it's original spot.

And so she did. She looked around the room again. She didn't feel the desire to do anything else.

Eren had rushed down another flight of stairs, this time almost completely darkened by the absence of light aside from the small flame melting the soft candle wax.

He slowed down to a trot as he heard a loud crash of upturned table and chairs. He poked his head round the corner to find the person he was looking for in front of a mess of broken wooden furniture.

"Section commander …? Is... something wrong?" He asked hesitantly, seeing how clearly she was
in a bad mood, struggling to contain her anger for an unknown reason.

Hanji faced him as she pulled her goggles down with a notable click and clenched fists. Her white hot fury had not fully dissipated.

"There was a cockroach!" Hanji cried, assuming an eccentric and exaggerated pose, "I know I shouldn't be surprised, considering we're at an abandoned checkpoint, but my attack had caused it to explode into a million pieces! Uh-huh, not a trace of it left!"

Hanji shrugged her shoulders, and Eren took the hint not to ask further. He proceeded round towards her.

"You're up awfully early. What's wrong Eren?" She asked, noticing the parchment he held out to her. "What's that paper?"

"It's a little late..." Eren hesitantly began, knowing Hanji clearly wasn't in the mood but knowing it was a matter of urgency. "... but I just remembered a conversation between Bertholdt and Ymir. So I wrote it down here."

2 Hours Later...

Everyone had been gathered round in the main area on the ground floor, as soon as Hanji had taken off along with Moblit. Levi had been left in command and promptly brought in the Reeves company which had arrived at that moment.

"What about Hanji?" Levi asked, walking around and checking on everyone's presence.

"She… ran off, saying something about an urgent question for commander Erwin," Eren answered as he rubbed the back of his head sweating a little.

"Dammit four eyes..." Levi decided he needed to get things in motion now. He wished Hanji had at least advised him, but things had once been left in his hands. "Nifa, good work riding here through the night."

"Thank you Captain," the short haired female soldier who was part of Hanji's squad responded as she finished her deep gulp of refreshment.

"Now, what's the message you have from Erwin?" The captain urged the discussion to begin.

"… Who are they...?" Nifa turned, nodding her attention to the two chubby men in business clothes, sitting down on the bench against the wall.

"Eh?" All eyes fell on the man with his arms crossed and the younger boy next to him, lounging much more at ease. Historia stepped herself closer to Eren, taking a look at the two people she had seen walk in earlier just as Levi answered.

"The Reeves company. It's fine. Go ahead."

"Yes... sir." Nifa answered hesitantly, as Dimo took note.

"I understand if you want me to leave, soldier." The head of the Reeves company rose, understanding the necessity of confidentiality in some cases himself.

"No, stay and listen. That's how our agreement works. No secrets." Levi waved him down to
reassure him, "I trust you."

"Oh?" Surprised, Dimo took his hand and placed it on the head of the person next to him. "You even trust my kid, who you only met today?"

"If he's part of the Reeves company, then of course," Levi said as he turned to merchant's son. "Flegel, was it? I welcome you here."

"And you're … Levi right?" Flegel smirked somewhat arrogantly, "If you really want to make us feel at home, shouldn't you at least bring some snacks?"

The room was silenced immediately, as everyone broke into a sweat immediately, and Eren himself jumped, brushing his arm with Historia's as they shared a silent apology and shuffled back just a tiny bit so.

Dimo swiftly grabbed his son's head and lowered it down as he uttered his apology, "Sorry… I've been bringing him around with me, thinking that he might one day take my place… but I spoiled him, so he's a total child. We'll leave the room, so just tell us what our role is first."

"No. Stay here and listen with the group. This will affect more than just the Reeves company. It will help shape the future of this world. That's why I need your strength and your trust. " Levi once more, reaffirmed their place as Dimo consigned.

"Okay." he merchant lifted his hand of his son, looking at him disapprovingly, "we'll sit here. Keep going."

"… Alright. So, about the question of how to have Historia take the throne as queen..."

"… Huh?" Historia popped her head up upon the mention of her name.

"..."

"... Queen?" Armin who stood behind Eren and Historia, summarised the word which was flowing through everyone's minds.

The words carried a deep meaning. The residents of the room all fell quiet.

"Captain Levi?" Noticing the confusion of everyone's faces, Nifa questioned the squad leader.

A deadly aroma filled the air, as individual movements felt like cranking steel in the turning of gears. At least, it did in Historia's mind.

She had half convinced herself instantly when she heard it, thinking she must have misheard something.

And the other half of her rejected the idea instantly.

A Queen. Royalty. A crown on top the head, stuck at the head of the world. Power. Someone who had the power to command the people of the empty world to her bidding. That is what being a ruler meant in her story books as a child.

There were girls who dreamed of being princesses and having their wishes granted in the fairy tales she had read. Before the ending, told her about the reality. That it was not something people were simply given because they wished for it. It was not something that people simply got at all. That was what the firmly printed notes at the end of each and every one of those fairy tales told her.
Well, to begin with, unlike the girls in those stories, she had felt quite different at the prospect of becoming a queen. Back then as she laid down in the soft, fresh grass while a calm breeze whistled across the green fields, she thought she didn't like the thought of it.

Being given the rule of an empty world. Being given a position higher above anyone in an empty world. It's not like she knew it for certain but —

She felt like the view from that high above would only show her how big the empty world is.

She wouldn't want to see that. She doesn't want to realise how far the emptiness spreads. After all, it was everywhere. From the housing at the centre where her grandparents shunned her, to the borders at the fence which she would not cross, where the kids would throw rocks at her.

There's no reason why the world would be any less empty outside there. So there was no point in seeing the view from the top of an empty world.

None. That view had not changed since 5 years ago. Everywhere she had gone, whether as Krista or Historia, it was different, but it was all just as empty.

There was no point in just seeing more of it as the queen. Why would she ever want to see something like that.

It was only when she met her. It was only when she met Ymir that she felt something well up within her. But the emptiness returned to her when she was gone.

She wouldn't find any way to fill her emptiness this way. She would lose sight of the signs which where leading her is she were to become something like a queen. Why would she do that. She wanted to —

"I forgot to tell my squad, but... the current Fritz royal family is something of a proxy for the real royal family. The real one is the Reiss family." Levi stated, not seeming to be bothered by not mentioning this earlier.

Historia became the focus of everyone. She felt the wall behind her. Without realising she had stepped back as Armin and Connie made way for her and found herself already up against the wall.

She looked around, at everyone's faces. They all seemed to be surprised and equally unaware. She couldn't fault them, and their stares felt like sharpened daggers pushing themselves into her skin.

Armin raised his hand, wishing to confirm, "I believe you just said Historia would take the throne as queen, right...? Is that the main goal of this revolution?"

"That's right. Historia, your thoughts?" Levi's dead serious expression caused her to freeze.

"...Ah... I... can't... there's no way." Cold sweat broke out as she looked to the ground. Blood pumping through her veins as she realised this wasn't the answer they wanted to hear. Perhaps if she wear Krista, she would have readily agreed.

"Yeah. If you walked up to someone and told them to become the ultimate ruler of humanity, not too many people would have the nerve to look you back in the eye and say 'sure'." Levi had stalked over her in the blink of an eye and was standing almost face to face with her.

"But that doesn't matter. Do it." The captain's expression became deadly as he continued.

"... I'm... unfit for the role..." Historia repeated, barely able to sort her thoughts out. The only thing
that was flooding through her head was the clear desire to not do as they asked.

"So, no?" Levi's eye clenched in preparation as he asked for an alternative answer.

"I'm... unfit..." The young blonde felt smaller than ever as she drastically tried to avert her eyes away from her intimidating superior.

"Fine. Then run." The older soldier trapped her by the collar and pulled her up into the air, causing the remaining members of the 104th cadet corps to jump in shock.

"Captain Levi?!" Sasha cried out, seeing the trouble Historia was in as she began choking. Jean and Connie were stuck in disbelief next to her.

"Run away from us as fast as you can. Because we're going to do anything and everything to make you do what we want. Looks like this is your destiny." The superior officer pulled her into eye contact with him, not relenting on the force he was holding her up with.

"Captain, what are you...?!!" Armin managed to find his voice, but unable to do anything else.

"If you don't like it, fight. Beat me back." He challenged her, taking into account that she was nearing her limit.

Sasha was about to shout before Eren overcame his doubts and put his hand on Levi's arm.

"Captain. Please, let go of her." Eren said sternly, masking his inner outcry and tinge of shame for not taking action any earlier. No, beyond that he felt stupid for not seeing this coming immediately.

Levi eyed him back, before letting Historia fall to her knees.

Historia collapsed coughing and grasping for breath on the ground. Sasha and Armin nealt down to her, "Historia..."

"You're going too far!" Jean exclaimed. Sasha and Armin placed their hands on Historia's shoulders, just as the former came to scowl at her captain. Mikasa herself was clenching her teeth as she glared disapprovingly at the same person.

Eren found himself in thought again as he pondered back to why he didn't act earlier.

"What do you see yourselves doing tomorrow? Will you have food on your tables? Do you think you'll get a good night's rest in your beds? Will those around you still be there tomorrow?" Levi had stepped back as he began listing.

"I never think so. And I doubt normal people think about these things on a daily basis. So that means I'm abnormal, probably because I've seen far too many abnormal things." A divide could be felt as he continued. A split between the recently enlisted soldiers and those with the more battle experience.

"But if Wall Rose were to breached tomorrow and we faced an emergency, I'd be faster than of you to react and to fight. I'll fight even if I have to face that hell again tomorrow. You've all seen some terrible things too, and there might very well be more waiting for you tomorrow."

Historia looked up again, managing to breath calmly with Sasha's arms at her back.

"I want to put an end to that recurring nightmare right now. There are those who would get in my way. But I'm fine with playing the role of the lunatic who kills people like that. I have to be ready
to rearrange faces. Because I choose the hell of humans killing each other over the hell of being eaten. At least that way, all of humanity doesn't have to be damned."

The captain breathed in, allowing his words to sink into the younger group before resuming.

"Of course there's another way. If we could simply seize control of this world, then a lot of people who would've died will live. That'd be nice right? It's all up to you Historia. Follow? Or fight? I don't care which. Just — "

Levi had taken a stride forward, already crossing half the distance to Historia.

But someone had stood in his way this time.

Eren had moved to stand right before his squad leader and superior. His expression was blanked out, then clenched with determination once again.

"Eren, get out of the way." Levi barked the order, each moment with his tolerance waning.

"Captain," Eren closed his eyes and did not move. He had been in this sort of position before, except he had been in Historia's place last time.

But no-one had stood in front of him. Because nobody needed to since their intentions had aligned. Riding with his back turned as his comrades sacrificed themselves for him.

He wasn't going to run. The circumstances had been different despite it being between the forceful captain and the person whom the Survey Corps needed to comply with them.

It was fine after all for him. So long as... He... Killed the Titans... It would... Be... —

No he was thinking about it wrong, that didn't matter. It's because Historia didn't want to do it. After the last couple of days, he just had an urge. An urge to stand up for her, though he kept reprimanding himself for not acting sooner, since he wanted to.

He wanted to help this stupidly honest, normal girl... who felt so alone... perhaps like he was when he chased after the enemies and wound up alone.

"With all due respect, sir. It's all important to be able to react in the moment... but I think a rushed resolve can be shattered a lot more easily than a consolidated one." Eren spoke his mind, hoping to tone out any sound of disapproval.

He knew why he hadn't stepped in sooner. It was because to some extent, he agreed with the captain, but he didn't agree with him on everything.

"Back when... Annie first reappeared, I cast aside the promise I made to trust in my comrades and jumped into a half hearted one to fight which I lost myself in."

He recalled the dead forms of his comrades.

"And I —"

"This isn't about you." Levi cut him off swiftly as he pushed Eren to the side. "You may be right that it can be better to spend some time in thought to strengthen your resolve. But, this is a simple matter."

Eren couldn't find anything to say in response. He knew that. But, all the same he felt like the need to stand up for Historia after the past few days they had spent together. But he knew he didn't have
any reason that the captain would accept.

Levi turned his gaze downwards, upon the scared ocean blue eyes of Historia. "You will become the ruler of these walls and do what we tell you. You don’t need to resolve yourself to put yourself on the battlefield. All you have to do, is make one choice. You have the outcomes in front of you, so — "

"CHOOSE RIGHT NOW! WE DON'T HAVE ANY TIME!" Levi kneeled down and grabbed he back of Historia's head roughly as he ordered her.

"I'LL DO IT!" Historia yelled her response. The only response she could give. "The next... role... I have to play is queen? Fine. Leave it to me."

She gasped out. She didn't want to do it. But... it was as her Levi had said. She wasn't really being given a choice.

"All right. Stand. We're counting on you. Historia." Accepting that the situation had seeped into her, Levi grasped her hand as he stood up himself.

"Yes, sir."

Historia's voice was flat again. Devoid of all feeling or emotion. Empty of any improvement she thought she had made over the last couple of days.

Levi looked around, he saw a Eren's dissatisfied look, a feeling of bitter disappointment. He decided that was to be expected. He wasn't too pleased however at the looks which the trio of Jean, Sasha and Connie had. Mikasa and Armin seemed a lot more accepting and Hanji's squad seemed just as much.

"Keep going Nifa." He leaned back on the wall next to Flegel as he gave the signal again.

"Yes, sir... here are the commander's orders for this operation." The brown haired soldier pulled out the pieces of paper she had been handed by the regiment commander.

"The plan will be executed today... The day that the Reeves company is to hand Eren and Historia over to the Military Police's First Squad. The First Squad is entrusting the Reeves company with everything from Eren and Historia's transportation route to the selection of the holding spot. We must use this to our advantage." Nifa read off the set of instructions which had been handed over to her by commander Erwin.

Historia had somehow or other found herself standing to Eren's left. She still felt dizzy. From the future of what she was about to become to the complete mentioning of her in the plan.

"We will hand Eren and Historia over to the First Squad as planned. Then we will use the Reeves company to follow them to wherever they're heading. Or perhaps I should say whoever..." She pulled out a piece of paper from the several documents which she had.

"Rod Reiss." Nifa pinned the portrait of the very man on the stone wall before everyone.

"Historia's biological father... The man who truly rules the world inside the walls."

Historia took a step forward to gaze at the drawing. She didn't know what she expected to see, but it was exactly like when she first saw him. It had been 5 years.

"According to the First Squad MPs we captured, he controls everything from high-ranking officials to the Royal Fritz family..."
A man with that much power. Why? Why did she spend all those days at that farm away from the world when he had so much power?

Perhaps her answer rested with him? She would have liked to think so. But the moment when Eren had stood up for her before his captain and that brief flash of lightning with the images in between kept her thinking otherwise.

Her fate lay before her, it was like she was told. They needed her for this. She would have to do it one way or another.

She felt herself being pulled up those stairs, three at a time. Unable to slow down, she could only hope she would find an answer along the way.

I hope I didn't make Mikasa sound too impulsive/'Ere h mode' and yeah I know, Ackerman powers should make something like flying into a freezing cold river flowing at high speeds in the middle of rain and grabbing an unconscious soldier all in the span of a few seconds easy, but yeah Mikasa will of course be jealous to some extent nonetheless but I hope to get her working properly since her connection with Eren starts to wane earlier!

Ending Scene: WARNING MANGA SPOILERS - CONTAINS SPOILERS FOR SEASON 4 (OR WHAT WILL BE SEASON 4 AT LEAST)

But everyone has something that is pushing them... to take that step into hell... for most people... that something is not their own will.

They're forced into it... by the people around them or their circumstances...

... but for those who push themselves into it, the hell they see is different...

...while those who don't have the power to resist that something are pulled into hell by it.

No matter how much they struggle, no matter how much they run, no matter how much they fight... if they lack the power to overcome that something which is dragging them in... then their destiny is already decided.

It had been decided from the moment they came to face with that something.

The wounded soldier lifted his arm up, pressed the crutch down with both, as he pulled himself upwards. He balance on one foot, then took another stride with the wooden support, then one step with his remaining leg.

The whole problem of walking good be solved in a few moments, however it would only lead to much bigger ones. He was going to stay with the one leg for a little while longer.

He mused at how it would be impossible to move without something to support half of his body. One half plus another, supporting each other and moving in conjunction.

For him to walk, and for either to move, both halves needed to support each other.

Otherwise both would succumb to their fate together.
Next time! I'll get it a few days before next time round! (says this every chapter so far)
Dang it though, another day later than wanted, but ah, as always thank you so much for the support, it's easily already improved scenes from the original version I was going to write so thank you all again!

Ah, forgot to do this last chapter but for anime-onlies, compared to in the anime where Eren and Historia are captured in episode 2, in the manga it happens after Historia is informed that she is to become queen and Reeves plays a much bigger part in this as they set up a way to hand Eren and Historia over to the MPs with the intention to track the carriage to Rod Reiss. Ultimately however, this fails as Kenny sees through this and removes any method of transforming Eren into a titan while leading Levi and the other SC who are following in and then back out of Stohess (and not Trost like in the anime) where Kenny then appears, killing Nifa, Abel and Keiji and then the fight from episode 2 ensues.

And from there, instead of being taken to wherever they where in the anime, Eren and Historia are immediately taken to the Reiss chapel like in the manga. But yeah, beyond that we don't see anything else like the Kenny/Eren interaction here.

Discord invite: https://discord.gg/csQFFUC

"speech"

'thoughts' - Italics

Chapter 5 - Aufgesplittert

Late Spring of the Year 849 – The 3rd Day after Departure

It was rather easy to think there's enough time to do 'this' and 'that' when planning things for the next day or sometime after. Sometimes its the unforeseeable things that take a few seconds and then another minute or two there. Then tardiness which is out of your hands and dependent on other people, which adds another hour here and there.

The Squad 8, consisting of the 5 individuals each predicted to be considered for the top 10, was no exception to this rule.

They had at least managed to set out swiftly after Reiner's little play without any further issues. Honestly, when it comes to the cliché turn of events where a boy or a girl has seen something they shouldn't have or touched the wrong place of somebody else, all it takes is a bit of understanding from both parties and the problem could sensibly be resolved without a bit of pointless drama and accusations.

At least in the case of misunderstandings, since it cannot be denied that in some cases, it's an antic taken too far. Regardless however, Annie seemed to think no less of Reiner while Krista quickly
went to him and checked for any non-existent injuries. With that at least, the group were able to
arrive in the rather tranquil town of Jinae not long after dawn.

But, they were after all still cadets and regardless of how skilled they might be, their superiors
would not take a positive approach to having to deal with their training task which had been
scheduled into their regular duties.

Of course however, many of the superiors would be 'taking a break from their tiresome work'
whenever they could. Eren had spent much of the previous day seething through gritted teeth,
holding himself back from lashing out at the drunken soldiers sneaking off to brothels and the sort.

When they had reached Jinae swiftly enough on the day before, they had to unload and organize
the storage options to ensure that the documents they would transport did not suffer any damage
nor too much creasing. As a result, they had to drop off a fair amount of their rations, having been
forced onto them several batches of various paperwork as opposed to the single batch they had
been entasked with.

It was quite obvious to them all, that the higher ranking officers were adding extra work to them
seeing as they were mere cadets, and they then could save up a little extra cash which they would
have needed to pay the proper transporters with.

Eren's anger flared up naturally, and despite trying to contain himself, he ended up slipping in his
comments with subtle threats to try and change his superiors minds. To this, the captain had waved
off uncaringly, and Reiner had to usher Eren to calm down before he ended up agreeing.

After that, they had made the journey to Stohess District which was thriving as usual from its usual
business, both legal and not.

Eren had genuinely considered just dropping the extra luggage of requests onto the road they were
travelling on, which had been pushed on them when he saw how much they primarily consisted of
alcohol orders. Annie had in secret done just that with hers, internally thanking Eren for
suggesting the idea.

When they had arrived at Stohess, the afternoon sun was already starting to begin its descent. The
MPs were even more at ease and uncaring of their work given the privileges they receive while
serving in the interior, and Eren was naturally disgusted even more so.

Both sides had a poor view of each other, and so time was spent here and there. Here, the group
had split once more as they had been tasked to obtain additional mounts. The residents of Stohess
seemed to have a much worse view of the military than elsewhere, and Reiner's influence along
with Krista to a lesser extent was essential with getting any progress made.

Krista's unusual quietness, compared to her regular eagerness to jump in to resolve all problems
with her charisma, was beginning to be noticed by the others. When questioned, she had merely
answered that this task was making her nervous and having no alternative, the others accepted it
as such.

The exception of course, being Eren.

It was, relatively speaking, only a short distance further into the north from their usual training
camp, however the morning chill felt thick as soon as Eren woke on the morning of the 3rd day.

It penetrated through every fibre of his worn down tunic and clung onto every fraction of his skin.
He stretched out and unpeeled the blanket which covered him. Prickling and goosebumps
assaulted him as he breathed more of the fresh air just as he stepped over Reiner’s sleeping form and made his way outside.

A thin fog was hiding anything from sight in the distance. The sky was grey and hid the sun despite lighting up the clouds to a small extent.

The Reiss family lands. The group had intended to arrive at the church, which didn’t even appear on their maps, on the day before. Asking the people living here was their natural next step. On a roadside tavern was marked, where they had intended to get information from the nightly visitors.

Right now, Eren could see the fences which split the steepe planes around them with the cultivated farm lands to the north east, just before the distance where the fog was located. Eren couldn’t make it out very well, but even with the grey tone the world around him was being cast in, the lands appeared quite rich and fertile judging by the fair amounts of grasslands all around which were swaying gently from the morning breeze.

There were little rivers here and there on the small moors which only slightly disturbed the otherwise flat land.

“So you were born here, huh Krista?” Eren began, causing the back of the small blonde to jump as he approached, the grass absorbing the sound of his movements.

“A-ah, erm, g-good morning Eren,” Krista replied, having ended up falling asleep, while wrapped slightly with a single blanket around her shoulders.

The small girl had first jolted from being fast asleep, into immediately trying to assume her regular kind-hearted act before once more reminding herself of how she must not come off too forceful when it was around Eren. She couldn’t allow for him to glare like he did back then.

Krista was a girl whom everyone loved. She pushed those words through her head, feeding herself on the only thing she could live on.

It’s what she had to do. Especially now, when they were so close to this place again. She had never expected to return here. But here she was, near the gates of where she didn’t exist to her family, where the other kids would throw rocks at her for fun and where there was no-one to turn to for anything. The place where –

“Hey, Krista.” Eren called to her, after he had wandered over to his horse's saddle and pulled out a map.

“Y-yeah, um, I w-wasn’t dozing off, j-just so you know,” Krista managed, hoping she didn’t portray herself badly. She had been watching Eren for much of the past few days, and quickly gathered that he wasn’t approving off the slightest of how their seniors acted, and she sure didn’t want to be in Eren’s bad books for not doing her night watch properly.

She wondered… if it had been just about anyone else, if they would have been convinced her little fib was the truth.

“… yeah… I’m sure that none of us have really been able to focus completely for so long, but I guess that’s what they are testing us against,” Eren said, walking over to her steadily, ”anyway, that’s not what I wanted to say. Since you lived here once, do you have any idea of a general direction we should go in?”

The question froze her, making her one with the morning blades that bit into her. The place where she was born… enclosed by the fences of a large farm. She had never taken a step beyond it. She
didn't know anything at all aside from that world within the cage she was born in.

"Um, well... no." The only response which Krista could give. She could pretend she did and try to act helpful that way. No, that wouldn't do her any favours at the end of the day if they spend hours wandering round aimlessly. "... I'm sorry, but... I'm not really all that familiar with the place."

Eren watched her cuddle up, pulling her knees close into herself as she sat on the fresh grass. '... was she... who knows... it's not something I want to ask her about... still... she looks... just like A-' Eren's thoughts were cut off just as Annie stalked out of her sleeping arrangements, glared at the outside, and everything she could see, before going back in. Her mood had clearly not improved.

Once more, they had settled for 2 tents since they had ridden as far as they could into yesterday's evening before the night fell. However, everyone had still been tired to a lesser extent from being on the move so much and so it was 2 tents again, and the horses proved a lot more difficult to tie up when there was scarcely a tree in the distance, and the stumps on the floor kept being pulled out.

Eren had intended to pass through the Reiss family lands in yesterday's evening since they only needed to drop in the extra horses which they had been riding with from Stohess. He had wanted to gain some more ground on their way to Orvud district as they would need to today but time would not be so kind.

As a result, they had to deal with the matter him early in the morning again, since the Reiss lands were still some kilometres away. Besides, this way, Eren could still adhere to Krista's request this way.

"Alright, don't worry about it." He said in response, just as Krista nodded and Eren resumed staring at the map. Just the dotted lines going around a large area, indicating the Reiss territory.

It was large, even by noble standards. The several roads leading through it and a couple on the road stops were marked, along with the cross near the middle of the lands which pointed out a little village there, left unnamed.

Eren could understand if Krista wouldn't have been familiar with the entire area after all she must have been young when she left this place.

Krista looked up at Eren, who hadn't moved and instead was frowning intensely at the map.

"... Krista. If there's anywhere you want to avoid, you should tell me now." Eren felt a sense of familiarity in that look. He had never seen himself with the face itself... but he felt that he didn't look that much different when he thought about his own home.

One day, he would of course have to return. On the day in which he wiped out the Titans, he would pass through the place where it all happened. He didn't want to go back there at all. There was no reason for him to go back there. But he felt he would end up doing so anyway.

But there's no way he could bring himself to walk down the same road he was being carried away through. The crimson droplets would still stain the ground there no doubt. He didn't want to go down that same road. So...

"I... I mean, don't... mind me," Krista added a delicate and what she hoped was an assuring smile, rather than a pained one when she replied. "I'll be alright... forget what I said the day before... I can't exactly run away from it forever... besides, we'll just be passing through right?"

"... yeah, alright then," Eren concluded. He hated when she would act like that, but... he was more
accepting to what she said. She was right after all… it was their mission to pass through here, and one day… he would have to go to that place again.

In a year's time? In 5 years or 10? It didn't really matter… but he knew that he'd go back there someday. And so did Krista… to whatever it was that she ran away from. However, he didn't think he could bring himself to walk down that exact same road to where he watched his mother die.

But Eren at least felt that he agreed with the adamant stance Krista was taking. After all, it wasn't Eren's place to decide anything for her like that. If she said that she wanted to confront her past, then Eren felt like accepting.

That was all there was to it. They weren't exactly friends but Eren nodded in encouragement to her. As a fellow trainee, both intending to join the Survey Corps… it was the only thing he should do.

Soon enough, everyone had gathered themselves up, and they moved themselves back onto the road before setting out again.

The clouds had dissipated and the light blueish sky returned. Occasionally, tufts of grass would blow into their faces with the irregular wind carrying them across the flat lands.

Eren caught Krista from the corner of his eyes a few times, her hands tightly gripping the reigns of her horse and the unsettling look in her eyes never stopping as she gazed straight on ahead, down the road.

... Still, in that moment, even if not entirely… Eren thought as if he wasn't looking at Krista… but the real person behind the mask.

For the first time to him, her azure eyes had looked just as true as the colour of the sky.

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 – After the Plan to make Historia the Queen**

The debriefing had concluded as Historia spaced out and ceased to concentrate on what was being said.

Her only role was to be the enthroned queen after all. That was all. The only part she had in it.

"... to seal the hole... in Wall Maria." Historia's attention switched back in just as Nifa finished speaking.

'Ah... that's were this is all heading after all...' She thought. 'Out there... far away... while my role is to stay at the centre... the place where Eren... and everyone else around here were going to go...'

She remembered how she felt something just a few days ago when Eren had spoken to her. Something she had felt only when Ymir was here.

But she had also gone that way... beyond the wall...

She glanced up from the floor and looked at Eren, straining her head and making her neck feel a little sore again.

Eren looked troubled. But he looked determined nonetheless. She wondered what he was thinking. That's mostly all she had been wondering the last few days.

But it was like Eren said. Staring at him and watching his shadow isn't going to give her an answer.
Would a ting in another role give her an answer? She didn't think so, but... that was all she could hope for.

Switching from one thing to another. It was all she could... as she tried to find an answer...

6 Hours Later...

The meeting spot was hidden in the woods on the mountainside. A mine which had never been completed beyond the inner workings that lined the interior walls, preventing collapse. The ground was uneven at seemingly every point, various unearthed bits of rock everywhere.

"If that means I can do business in Wall Maria again, I'll do anything! I'll even play along with this stupid act!" The merchant spoke to himself more than anyone else.

"Agh?!" Eren splattered, as dirt was robbed into the side of his face, "what are you doing?!!"

"You were supposed to be held here for two days," Dimo answered, checking the restraints on Eren's body, "it'll seem strange if you're totally clean."

"Hey, pops." Flegel called his father as he strolled in through the entrance. "Why do we have to listen to that midget?"

"He's a punk! What kind of person would rough up a little girl like her?" The merchant's son swung his fists randomly as he tried to show off his glare. Frankly, Historia could hit better than him, not that this was the time or place to say such a thing. "What was the guy's name? ... Levi? If he'd gone on for a second longer, I'd have torn him a new one!"

"Listen Flegel, I hope you understand one day. Merchants have to be able to read people. That awkward yet kind man... is being true to his word when he says he'll protect us and the barely alive district of Trost, even though he doesn't really have to." Dimo clapped his hands clean of the dirt as he tried to give an important lesson to his son.

"A man like that must come from absolutely nothing. So missy — excuse me, your highness, I know your boss is a scary man... but... he's not a bad guy." He switched his focus to Historia, a smile plastered on his face as he tried to resolve any bad blood from the morning. "Once you become queen, smack him and tell him this: 'I dare you to hit me back!'

It would be no good for Historia to bear bad feelings against her superior, as shown through her recent behaviour. Though frankly, Dimo just wanted to see it happen.

"Hah! I like that!" Eren's head popped up in amusement and encouraged Historia on, "you should do that Historia! How do you think he'll react?"

Eren looked to Historia, hoping to see any sign of her mood brightening up. There was none. The joke had seemingly not sunk into her and instead Eren felt he might have said it improperly.

"Where are you going Flegel?" Dimo asked, noticing his son leaving as he stuffed his hands back into his pockets.

"Taking a leak." Flegel replied uninterestingly, not agreeing with his father's views. He could have been at home, relaxing for the day yet instead he was out here, spending time with a group that were technically outlawed.
"Oh! Can't forget." The merchant, dug his hand in one of his pockets and rustled around before pulling out a set of tiny and thin blades. "The items you ordered. They need to be this size if you're hiding them."

He showed them to Eren and picked them out, one by one, and stuck them in specific places, "Both hands... Both feet... And under the tongue. When they said to capture you, they said not to cut you in any way. How ridiculous is that?!"

Eren pondered Dimo's words. The squad they had encountered seemed to have intended to shoot him even in the legs. Had they been given different orders? Why? Could they have been told this... so they would be used as bait?

"You too missy," Dimo said as he wandered behind Historia and placed a blade in her hands which were tied behind the chair she was sat on. "Don't let them find it."

"If it comes down to it, someone needs to hurt Eren. It can be anyone. If the plan goes south..." The merchant pondered at the chances, keeping one blade of his own tucked in for later, "... or if we get to Lord Reiss... and we need to get the situation under control."

One of Dimo's men rushed over and began whispering in his ear just as the head merchant nodded and said, "I'll be right back, good thing we arrived swiftly. I don't know when they'll be arriving but we should have some time even if they're a bit early."

The two men left together. The only ones left now were Eren and Historia, tied up in silence together. They had been in each other's company frequently for the past few days, as Eren noted.

He looked over to the girl who looked just as dejected as she did in the morning, making Eren feel no less guilty as older memories cropped up.

The silence was impossible for him to bear as he watched how Historia was looking just as hollow as several days prior to the commander's first orders.

"Hey... I'm sorry." Eren said, breaking the silence as he lowered his head and gazed at the floor. He didn't know if it was guilt that compelled him or just that he preferred how Historia had felt slightly more alive before this morning.

"...Eh?" Historia muttered, letting her eyes leave the ground for a moment.

"I... took too long to step in. This morning I mean, when the captain did... you know. I'm sorry," Eren said, his position now practically copying Historia from moments ago, though the reasons were much more different.

"You did it anyway," Historia stated, almost as if trying to reassure him. Almost.

"Huh?" Eren looked back up, as she in turn looked away.

"You tried to defend me anyway. I should be thanking you for just that. I mean, you've been nothing but -" She continued, feeling the need to reassure him. Though... she still would have liked it if someone had stepped in sooner. No, that didn't matter. She would have liked it if this morning hadn't happened at all.

"No. I'm sorry. I knew completely what was about to happen, yet I stood by and watched."

"You're wrong Eren," Historia adamantly shook her head, denying her companion's apology, "you tried to do something like that anyway, that's more than enough."
"... I'm sorry..." Eren repeated himself. Playing the memory through his head.

"Eh? Eren I already told y- " Historia was cut off.

"It's not just that time! Back then, I'm sorry for just minding my time wh- " Eren desperately managed, deciding to come clean completely.

"Damn, they're already here!" Dimo called as he strolled quickly in and made his way to Eren, quickly bringing out a gag and tying it around Eren's mouth before the brunette could give any reply, "they're a lot earlier than expected. It's a good thing we got ready early, you brats. Remember, we hate each other from here."

Eren struggled a response before he quickly gave up. Their conversation would have to wait. They all cleared up their acts with Eren and Historia adopting troubled and defeated expressions. Historia didn't even need to act to do this.

"Good job, Reeves." A tall man spoke as he walked in, wearing a long black longcoat and top hat. He stopped just next to where Historia was seated. "Hello there... remember me? Krista Lenz."

Historia felt like she remembered the voice from somewhere as she craned her head to look up. She regretted it immediately. The same face of the man from that day. He looked just like he did back then.

"I was there the moment ya were given your new name." The wielder of the blade that stole the life of the woman that was called her mother. Back then, she had felt far too shocked and ununderstanding to feel fear. "It's been five years, Krista. Look at how much ya've grown... No... ya haven't changed much."

Historia instantly averted her eyes back down on the floor again, unable to face the overwhelming pressure of the man's presence. Eren felt his heart jolt in panic at the sight.

'So the first squad were the ones who killed Historia's mom...!' Eren concluded in his head.

It was different. Very much so. He knew it was different from his own mother. But he felt the need to step in. This time, he would do it properly. He wasn't going to wait around and see how it would play out for a little. As soon as they found the man who was Historia's father, he would transform at once.

"Reeves. We need to talk. C'mon." The tall men gestured out the door to Dimo as he lead him away.

"Oh? What could it be? Finally like paying me a proper fee?" The merchant played along, completely disguising his nervousness beneath his words.

"Yes... This is quite good work. I'd like to speak to ya about it more." The intimidating figure turned and waved at his two comrades who had appeared by the door at some point just as Dimo followed him, casting back a last nervous look at Eren before he left.

A man and woman both covering their faces. Historia peeled her head out around the corner, sweat strolling down her face as she verified that the man from her past had gone.

The two new figures approached immediately, just as Historia turned to share a look at Eren. It would be alright. Eren wanted to convey those words to her desperately, but the two newcomers blocked their line of sight.

Eren breathed heavily against the rag in his mouth. The woman who stood before him in a bright
cloak felt like it reminded him of someone else. Before even managing to think of who, he barely registered the woman pulling something out from under her raincoat and instantly throwing it down onto his head.

He was sure that at the last moment, he saw Historia gasp in terror at him through his one eye as it fell shut.

---

**Late Spring of the Year 849 – High Morning of the 3rd day after Departure**

"Just head over to thassit centre ye' have marked on that map, seem accurate enough to mea," the drunkard slurred in his speech, proceeding to down drink immediately down his throat. "... mea, yeah you know 'em, mea eyes! Thassit, you call 'em that!"

The man seemed like another field hand judging by his attire. He was leaning against the fence with bottles lining at his feet, having been praising the morning breeze when Eren and his group had come by.

"Alrighty then, thanks for the trouble!" Reiner placed the parchment back into one of the bags equipped on his large mount and bid the slacker farewell as he gestured towards Eren who immediately continued with leading their horses.

The older blond sighed once the group had moved out of hearing distance, not that there was much to worry about even if they had voiced their disapproval.

The tavern which they had intended to frequent had been closed, with the owner seemingly gone for business elsewhere and would be back tonight, though this all came from the field worker who had been trying to sneak off with a barrel of brew.

They rode once more down the dragged out path. It was quite warm now that the sun had covered the land, driving away the cold which had stuck to everyone's skin and providing a soothing sensation with the ongoing wind that blew through their hair, ruffling them in all directions.

"Hey, Eren, think like we should split up perhaps?" Reiner called across to their temporary leader again. "We'll want to get to Orvud as soon as we can, so how about we search and meet up at a specific spot at about 2 hours past midday?"

"Yeah, let's do that." Eren thanked internally again for Reiner's support. Eren had been quiet on that day so far, making no remark on the drunkard they had passed like he usually would do. His group had taken notice of it.

"... Eren?" Reiner once more was the one to voice the concerns of the rest, "what's on your mind?"

Eren sighed as he felt the steady beats of the hooves of the dozen horses they had with them, hit the ground at different times, the impact sending light shudders through his body.

"Nothing, just... " Eren couldn't tell apart the beating of the drum like sounds apart, no matter how much he tried. Just like the drums of the 36 feet all over the place, he couldn't tell the difference between a large majority of the people he had come across, especially in the recent days. "... this training exercise... I just wonder... if its designed to show us the sorts of people in the world."

"Hm. You've been taking your lessons seriously," Reiner smirked approvingly.

"Huh?" Eren turned back, noticing how Reiner had a knowing look pasted in his expression. Annie, who was riding at Reiner's flank as well were revealing a thin strand of approval.
“You see how many people are right? So long as you realise that, that’s all that matters. You should act in whatever way you think is best, but you seem to have at least taken the people around you into account more.” Reiner continued.

Krista looked across her 4 companions in front of her. Eren looked quite downcast, but at the same time as if he accepted an important fact. She looked and saw Bertholdt, bearing a similar expression to Eren as he drifted behind their leader. Reiner and Annie had something akin to the other two boys in their expressions.

‘What are they...’ Krista’s thoughts could not be concluded. She couldn’t read the exchange that happened between them. But, she felt like all 4 knew something she did not.

Unlike them, her thoughts were turned only to the fact that she had returned from the cage she had been thrown out of 4 years ago.

The first sign of a wooden building popped up in the distance, just as Eren increased their pace a little more. Krista had never once been out of the farm property she had lived in. The only time she had left was when her father had taken her out, and she had been blindfolded then taken by carriage into Trost.

She had not seen anything else within the Reiss lands at all. She knew that other kids and workers would mainly go and come from the direction to the left of the entrance to the farm.

She had no bearings of east or west from back then, and in general, she was completely clueless of anything when it came to this place.

They had already arrived past the building which had been in the distance moments ago. Krista had been lost in her memories and she could only feel nervousness jolting through her veins as they entered what appeared to be the main gathering point of the land.

General wares and market stores lined the road along with the various buildings where no more than 50 people were strolling around. It all seemed like a regular day, with people going about their business steadily, while many taking time to chat with their colleagues and a couple were haggling with a shopkeeper.

The large amount of people looked like farm hands, along with a fair amount of traders who had their carriages parked by the roadside.

The military presence seemed to be lacking, and they drew a number of unwanted stares to themselves as Krista only gulped and tried to breathe as she calmed down.

‘Ha... ha, what was I expecting? ... It’s all just... normal,’ Historia chastised herself internally. She exhaled as she followed Eren’s example as everyone dismounted. She was surely being dramatic at the thought of something happening to her just by walking into this village.

Yes, she had been threatened to never return here, however she wasn’t here to make a claim to her name. She was Krista Lenz. Not the bastard child with the blood of a noble running through her. She repeated her name into her head.

“Well um, how about, Reiner, Bertholdt. You guys investigate more up the eastern road and me and Annie go search back down the western road we came from. Krista, if you can tie up the horses and show our task to the stores around here and get us food for the rest of the day.” Eren instructed, handing over the directive to Krista to keep hold of.

Krista nodded swiftly, feeling an odd sensation in her stomach again. She realised what it was
immediately. Just like when she heard how Eren promised to save her almost 1 year ago from the
gang of thieves, the first person to ever risk his life for someone like her. Here he was again,
paying close attention to her secretly, and being considerate enough to give her the job which
required the less wandering.

She accepted the gesture fondly. Of course, perhaps if it was anyone else, they'd have done the
same thing. It was after all just a small act of camaraderie.

But... it was when she looked into Eren's eyes that she could see so many swirling emotions mixed
in. He had many things to deal with just for himself, yet he still took the time to consider her in.
Just like a year ago, just like now.

No... she was going to do it again.

"Alright, should be no more than 3 hours but we'll meet here again." She shook herself awake, just
as Eren issued everyone off, "Krista, make sure to keep an eye out."

She nodded as the brunette turned his back and left along with Annie. There was a fountain near
the centre of the small village. Krista began tying each one of the dozen mounts they had brought
to a nearby fence post, seeing as how it was as good of a place as any for everyone to take notice
of.

12 bounds of rope, tied. She shook it, receiving a firm refusal to budge, making her sure that they
wouldn't escape behind her back.

Her squad members had already left into either direction down the road. Bits of her hair flew into
her eyes from the sudden breeze. She pulled the strands away and cupped the side of her hair,
tucking bit of it behind her ear, as she scanned the semi circular side of the road.

A pub, and then seemingly another along with several equipment and repair shops lined next to
each other. Business seemed slow, with only a couple of them bartering with present customers.

Bread. The smell of fresh dough taken recently out from an oven tickled her nose as the scent filled
into her. Her eyes found the corner shop which had wrapped breads of various shapes, carefully
placed for display in clean cloth.

Krista mustered her happy demeanour and skipped over to the owners of the bakery, seemingly a
wife and husband who held the usual dull expressions as they went about their day.

"Excuse me!" Krista practically sang as she greeted the surprised couple who turned to her. Their
eyes however narrowed instinctively as they saw the trainee badge on her uniform. "Could you
plea--"

"You military, kid?" The man cut her off roughly, arching his back and placing an arm on his hip.

"Eh? I mean, yes. Yes I am a cadet of the 104th corps." Krista resumed her smile, beaming with all
her might as she tried to appear the response had no phased her.

This sort of response was fairly natural. As cadets, a salary is not permitted until they enlist in one
of the regiments, that way they didn't get those who wish to snatch some cash before dropping out
soon after. In exchange however, cadets were provided with free food, drink, lodging, equipment
and so on. However stuff like extra clothing was not provided besides their uniform.

Once cadets would graduate and enlist in their divisions, the free amenities would continue, but
along with it, the average daily pay for someone serving in the garrison was akin to 3 such loathes
of bread as a general average.

Of course, it was possible to survive on rations provided to them, however this only applied in places where barracks were stationed. Currently, they could technically last the day with the bits of oat crackers they had left, though they had eaten the last of their canned beans in the morning, and it would mean that they needed to obtain some alternative unless they felt like riding and sleeping on empty stomachs.

My no means, was this an impossible feat, however the toll of riding all day non-stop was coming close to their limits and mental tolerance.

"You got coin on you?" The woman stepped forward and pursued.

Money. That was something which Historia was likely never to get either. The Survey Corps members themselves did not receive any pay. The organisation itself was funded by the government and the amount of money they received was limited to begin with.

A soldier would be able to request something to be ordered provided that the request was reasonable, but otherwise as soldiers who could die at any moment, the idea of a salary was instantly put aside to avoid inheritance issues along with preventing gambling and common breakdowns of relations.

In other words, money was something which would never pass through her hands.

Krista turned away after nodding understandingly. The only thing she could rely on was the people's goodwill, which wasn't easy to come by ever since the fall of Wall Maria.

"Oh fine... hey lady soldier!" The baker had seen the rejected look which the young girl had received and the now small hope filled eyes she had as she turned back to him calling. "Here, but no more than this alright?"

She hopped back over, her beaming face radiating happiness and gratitude as she received the pastry. The man's wife behind him smiled at the sight while the man shook his head and offered, "it's just cause one of those always ends up gettin' stolen by those damn brats. Don't think so much of it."

The man massaged his hair with his hand, shaking to himself unable to hide how the charm of the young blonde girl had affected him.

"Thank you mister!" Krista graciously left, knowing it would be rude to ask for anything more. She looked at the strange shape of the bread. Completely circular with a hole in the centre of it like she had never seen before. Like a ring, just one bigger than her whole hand.

It would be something at least. Bread was pretty common to the trainees, though it was always cold by the time it passed to them, and often slightly old.

Fresh, warm and begging to be eaten. Or so her stomach said. She wasn't a glutton at all, but she felt all to tempted to try something like this. Just a little bite, they would all end up sharing it after all. No, she had to resist. It wouldn't be fair if she ate before everyone else. More importantly, she hurried over to a fruits and vegetable stall.

The owner looked up from the seat he was using and Krista repeated the process. Initial rejection again, she wandered around for a few seconds looking desperately for anyone else, before being called back over and accepted again.
Red applies, green apples and more apples. She couldn't exactly be picky and so she took again what she could, wrapping them in some clean cloth which she had held onto.

Some carrots from here, and some fresh water from the well from there. One by one, bit by bit, Krista managed to procure a sufficient amount as she went.

She had placed everything that had been kindly given to her free of charge back into the saddle of her own horse. She had then fished out everyone's water skins and proceeded to transfer the water from the bucket which she had been allowed access to.

Unscrewing the lid one at a time, and drowning the containers into the water filled bucket as she watched the bubbling between the cool liquid which was slowly declining each time.

She was kneeling down as she tightened back the lid again. Three done. She was at the roadside, on the opposite side of the road from the majority of the shops, but a ways away from where she had tied up their now grazing horses.

She reached for the fourth container that which was behind her. It was slightly heavier than the rest, still clearly filled at least to a quarter point. She opened it and emptied it, seeing no sense in mixing the water knowing that illness was common within the military.

She turned back round, intending to fill it up as well, only to be hit in the face by the splash of water and the wooden container that held it.

Mocking laughter followed as she fell backwards awkwardly and hit her head against the ground. Thankfully at least, the spot was grassy and didn't hurt her as much as it might have, if it were the road.

She pushed her back up using her arms on both sides as she looked up. Three boys, each of them seemingly just a few years older than her, each of them holding grins of amusement at the sight.

Each of them were donning field worker clothes, and one of them holding and leaning against a rake which was planted at his side.

"Oopsies, didn't see ya there," the leader of the boys who looked the most physically capable laughed boisterously at her.

Krista, surprised, struggled to think of the suitable response immediately. She watched the boys laughing at her, showing no intention to help her out.

"Hey, hey, you could have made Danny trip y'know? What were you gonna do if he 'urt himself huh?" The one who wore a hat and had the nicest looking clothes antagonised her. "You're a soldier ain't ya? You're supposed to be protecting us y'know."

"Ugh, Dan you're getting mud on your shoe, look where you're stepping, the lil girl's gonna make your feet dirty," the smallest one of the bunch jeered, drawing his friend's attention while continuing to lean on the rake which he had.

"Oh yuck," their leader noticing this, looked to the collapsed girl and smirked, "here!"

Flicking his foot, he kicked off the mud, aiming at Krista. Despite the close range, the teenage boy 'missed' his aim, and realising this quickly proceeded to kick the blonde girl down onto the floor again.

The kick caught Krista in a bad place but having seen it coming, she managed to take the hit
Moments ago she had been busy, fulfilling her role as expected. Yet in an instance, she was at the feet of the three teenagers before her. Krista got back up as quickly as she could. Using the fence alongside her to lift herself up.

The boys stopped laughing, watching her face them. Even the smallest of the three was almost a head taller than her. They were about to begin mocking her again, thinking the young blonde would try to intimidate her in some way. Thoughts of being reported to the military never crossed their minds.

However instead –

"I'm sorry for being in your way," the trainee soldier before them beamed up at them kindly, showing no ill intentions at all. "Please don't pay heed to me and go about your day as usual."

A smile that seemed almost angelic to them, and not in the least bit sarcastic. They stared at the girl in front of them, not knowing what to do anymore before the beaming smile of the young girl. A quite pretty young girl as all of them thought.

Even though she had just been kicked o the ground, there seemed to be no mud or dirt on her at all, only the wet shirt where the water they had kicked onto her was soaking through.

"Tch. Whatever, let's go guys," deciding there was nothing more to do, their leader gestured to his two lackeys as he began his way off. The other two followed after trading last glances at the girl, first the rake carrying one and then the one wearing the cap.

They slowly began their walk down the road eastwards. Krista was about to brief a sigh of relief, but –

"Hey... hold on you guys," the last of the three to move, the one who had the hat on his head called his two buddies to halt while making Krista freeze up again.

'No... please... please don't say it,' Krista begged to someone, anyone that the boy who she recognised with certainty would not say it. She didn't turn round, not daring to show her face again and draw attention. Silence. She began breaking up a cold sweat from the unease, feeling the presence of the boys still there. They made no response for half a minute.

Thud.

She felt the hard stone land solidly on the back of her shoulder, causing her gasp and squeak in pain, moving her hand to muffle the sound.

Crack.

She realised she had made a mistake in moving her right arm, as pain shot through it at the sound of the cracking bones. She had pulled it way to fast, although her bones were likely not broken to heavily, she felt like she pulled a muscle somewhere, as she dropped to one knee in pain.

It was throbbing immediately. The soreness spread across her upper arm as the impact of fiercely thrown rock hit its mark.

"Hey, its you isn't it?" She didn't know which one of the boys had said it. She didn't want to turn round, and confirm their suspicions. "You're that mistress's daughter aren't you?"
"Huh? Mistress? What do ya mean Danny?" The rake holder had walked back to the side already, stamping down the farming tool by his side. "What lady you talking about?"

"No, no, not a lady mistress, I mean the prostitute woman who lived at that farm down the road," their leader walked around Historia, throwing a rock between in his hands as he smirked down on Krista. "Don't ya remember. This is that harlot's daughter who would never leave her grandparent's farm."

"Wait you... oh my god, she is the one!" The smaller of the three lifted his rake back up and pointed it proactively at her, "hey where did you get off to? How did a mere girl like you end up being a soldier?"

"Hey guys..." The cap wearer stepped to the space in between his two friends. "Don't ya... think she's grown up pretty cute?"

The other two took note of their friend's thoughts and eyed the girl before them more carefully. Krista shuddered between the looks and grasped at her shoulder, trying to quell the pain even slightly. They were standing around her, but she could certainly escape couldn't she? And then what. Where could she go. She felt it. The trap all around her.

"Hey, hey, since your mother was one, you should be a slut as well right?"

She felt the unbreakable fences all around. It was impossible to escape it. There was no way she could take one step past it.

"Come on, why don't ya come with us and show us how you do it little whore."

She felt hands pulling her up and touching her body.

"Ooh, you're shirt's all wet, did ya do that for us? Bah, a little lower and then we'd be able to see."

Fight. She could either resist or endure. But if she wanted to stop this, she knew she had to fight back.

"What's with you? Why aren't you struggling? Do ya want this to happen?"

Krista was a kind-hearted girl whom everyone loved. There was no way that she could fight back. But... she couldn't allow this either.

"She's probably just shy about it, hey you really are a cutie. We never got your name, what was it again?"

This was wrong. She had to find a solution somehow. There had to be some other way, this... was just disgusting to her.

"Shh, keep it down, we're attracting stares now."

"Whatcha scared for? Nobody's gonna help a play soldier 'round here, let alone a little bitch like her. Oh fine, if you're so scared, take her this way!"

Nobody was going to come. She knew that there never was going to be some white knight in shining armour who would come riding on his gallant steed and save her.

In this world, she had to think for herself.

Krista swayed her body and threw her arms widely. Her eyes had been closed the whole time, tears
accumulating at her forcibly shut eyes. She hadn’t looked where she was even throwing her arms.

"Hey, hey now she’s struggling, hey get back here."

She had somehow managed to knock herself free. She felt herself land backwards on the ground again, as she desperately shuffled herself backwards. Her head knocked against the fence as she finally brought herself to open her eyes again.

The three boys were all around her, the leader and then rake holder right before her, while the cap wearer seemed somewhat more timid and reluctant to join in.

She had been dragged into a nearby building, away from anyone’s eyes. She felt the wood cracking as she was thrown to the floor while looking at the grinning faces encaging her,

Endure it. She needed to defend herself as much as she could. The kicking then began. Her arms protecting her face, her body, her legs.

Everything felt like it was being hit with the force of the rocks which had been thrown at her in the past. Soreness and pain seized her body, yet she didn’t allow her defence to break. If it did, she could only dread what would follow.

She needed to keep avoiding it until the boys lost interest. They always did in time. The boys would never cross the fence into the land themselves.

But there was no fence to protect her here. There was no wall she could hide behind. Krista began whimpering as the kicking continued unrelenting for a moment.

There would eventually lose interest. She just need to keep avoiding.

The only choice for Krista Lenz, was to endure.

But –

Why? Why where these boys denying her even now? She was Krista Lenz, not that girl from the past.

What could she do to make them stop? It hurt. She felt like breaking. She wasn't Krista Lenz, the kind-hearted girl whom everyone loved to these boys. She was just a useless and unwanted girl in their eyes. She wasn’t failing as Krista, she hadn’t failed before apart from that one moment, but her past was still resurfacing against her.

She had to separate herself from it. Krista had to separate herself from her past. But... h–

The kicking then stopped. She could have sworn she heard a door crashing open but all Krista could hear was the beating of blood rapidly through her veins.

"What th–" The boy was promptly upturned and landed with his head crashing on the ground and screaming in pain from the landing.

A brunette figure had charged in through the door and swiftly dealt a sweeping hit to the first boy. The three teens were all slightly taller than him, but the momentum had turned instantly to the newcomer's favour.

"Three of you huh, just like back then I guess." The figure spoke.

"Who ar–" The smaller of the three, yelped before crying out in pain as his head met a roundhouse
strike, knocking some of his teeth in partially. He was instantly knocked out by the power of the hit as he collapsed sideways onto the road.

The remaining one, the blond haired one who wore a hat raised his first in panic and tried to hit the new attacker. He was nowhere near fast enough, and his stomach was instead hit with enough impact to send falling right down.

"Huh, looks like things have changed since then," the person spoke again, as if recalling something to himself.

In moments it was finished, and Krista could only stare at the mad filled face of the same person who had played the biggest part in saving her last time.

Krista forced herself into a crouch and stood up, clutching the pain at her shoulder which remained. Her stomach pain caused her to slouch as she took into account that she had just been saved.

If he hadn't come just then, what would have happened?

But... the eyes and powerful moves fuelled by rage were not that of any hero. There may have been some charm in him, but there was more dangerous feeling in him. There may have been form and fashion executed in his moves, but they were empowered by brute strength.

His movements were keen, and quickly examining the surroundings, though he gave her a thorough look to ensure that there wasn't any dangerous bleeding on her.

In truth, there wasn't any actual bleeding which Krista was suffering from, no cuts only bruises and pain from her stomach and right shoulder arm.

"Hey, why didn't you ever fight back?" Eren turned to her sharply, anger flowing in waves through his eyes. He had finished each of them off with merely one move, though he had positioned himself awkwardly a bit here and there, his form had been swift and furious.

As if holding back some old grudge. He had immediately turned to her as she struggled to rise. There was no comforting words of 'you're safe now' nor a kind question of 'are you alright?'. Instead, Krista was drawn into the eyes of wrath, disappointment radiating out. Instead of responding back words of 'thank you' as her mind caught up with the reality of the three wounded boys on the floor around her and Eren's trained body, prepared for another strike.

"I..." Krista stuttered. The words of gratitude failed, mainly due to how compelled she felt to answer the question.

"You ended up like that because you didn't fight back. Are you just going to continue being weak and stay on the losing side?" His words cut her, at the stitches where she had pieced together the holes in the mark she took up.

"I... " Krista felt that the questions Eren had just posed were stabbing just as much into her as the abuse she had just received from the three boys from her past. Her head felt dizzy from it all, not knowing how to respond to Eren.

He had just saved her. Someone like that... saving someone like her just like now... surely they would be the ones offering comfort to her while she responded words of gratitude and happiness. She didn't know what to do. Once again, she was stuck when it came to the anomaly of Eren Jaeger.
The brunette sighed in response and took two large strides to the leaders of the boys who looked up at the new comer in shock. The military symbol on him told him all he needed to know. The bully raised himself, arching on one elbow, only to receive a foot grinding his face into the ground.

"Ah… Eren… there's no reason for you to be hurting th–" She began, taking a step towards Eren and trying to wave her hands in a reassuring manner.

"Still? After all this? So you would have been fine if I didn't help you out?" Eren cut himself in, having no interest in hearing such a typical response which he found downright absurd. "Would you have been fine while these pathetic vermin had their way with you? Would you have been fine if they did this to you everyday?"

"... B-but..." Krista knew she couldn't possibly given an answer to him. No. The answer to his questions were all of course 'no'. But even so...

– She was Krista.

"... But even so... there's..." Krista sought for an excuse to mutter, any excuse. "... there's no need for that now... it's all... alright now...

This wasn't how it was supposed to be. Her saviour should deal with the three bullies, check on her immediately, then let the instigators off with a warning and then she could respond with affection in turn. It didn't even need to be a white knight in shining armour who would come riding in on his gallant steed. It could be just another regular person who would do a similar thing.

But this was Eren.

The brunette sighed and shook his head, clearly not accepting her thoughts. In one swift motion, he lifted the leader up by the shirt and brought him face to face.

And then he dropped him.

"Are you hurt?" Eren asked the question that most others would ask first. He had turned to Krista, though the concern did not seem to fully reach his eyes.

Yet he offered a hand to her nonetheless. Her expression eased up as an odd form of happiness bubbled up.

It was a silly thing to remember when she thought back at it. But it was the first time she would feel his tender's hands.

The first time where she would make contact with his skin directly, out of the uncountable many times they would touch later on.

Should it not have been the heroic boy who would then patch them while acting modestly and averting their eyes? It wasn't the case when it came to Eren. At some point or other, Eren and Annie had returned to their agreed spot, and her fellow female cadet was the one to check her body for injuries.

She didn't remember it all too well, but she seemed to recall Eren taking her out the building she had been dragged into, which happened to be an abandoned shack and bringing her over to Annie who on a rare occasion looked surprised herself.

After that, Eren had disappeared for a while almost immediately from her memory.
Eren didn't know how much pain a thrown rock would deal, but he made sure to strike with the amount of force he would expect it to have at the very least. One kick that sounded the insides of the body, then another. About three hits per second, each with the strength to knock down a door as Eren once had.

The insides cracked and he swore he felt he hit something squishy on the inside as he locked his target on a different limb.

"GHAAAAH! Agh! ... W-We're... s-s-sorry, w-we sw.... s-swear.... P-please... st-s-stop...." the leader of the boys was whimpering, his head having just been smashed into the wall after he had cried out too loud to Eren's liking.

His other two cronies, were cowering in the corners, shivering in fear as they backed as far as they could, knowing they would be unable to escape even if they tried.

No, escaping never came to mind. All that was playing through them was how they watched the rag-like arm of their group's leader swinging out of balance in front of them, the bone clearly snapped off as the arm looked like it would fall off.

"You're the pathetic scum which plague this world, your worth less than shit, this is what you get for being what you are!"

The dislocated jaw was snapped shut firmly trapping any noise, as Eren sharply twisted and pulled the boy's other arm as it likewise was pulled out and twisted the opposite way round.

The weeping form of the boy was dropped to the floor as he gasped for breath, choking on the tears of agony.

"This is how it should be." He stepped onto one hand, grounding it into the ground and hearing the sound of fingers cracking.

The elder boy would likely never be able to move his hands properly again. He would never lift a farming tool, no throw a rock, nor touch anything again without the pain of the past 20 minutes that felt worth the pain of 20 lifetimes.

Eren walked over him, to the remaining two. "You're disgusting, filthy bastards. I'd kill you if I would, it won't have been the first time. But, you're fortunate since they'd notice your buddy go missing."

The remaining two boys whimpered and shook, nodding their understanding. A single minute of one finger being tentatively stepped on more strongly bit by bit until it snapped backwards was enough of a demonstration to them.

"Listen here. You and your friends were in this village, messing around, until this guy accidentally jumped his way in front of an incoming carriage and ended up like this." He fabricated the story for them as the two boys nodded, both of them leaking liquid after having soiled themselves completely.

"If you ever try preying on someone weaker than you again, or even if I ever think I've seen your faces again, I'll carve you out bit by bit with the bones of the titans I'll have massacred." He dragged up the head of the larger boy before them and spoke while flimsily holding the beaten body that was missing half of his teeth and skin pale from the blood he had coughed up down onto
himself.

Eren aimed and dug his fingers sharply into the eye sockets, rendering the elder boy blind forever.

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 - The Day After Eren and Historia were Captured**

The ability to see was something determined by the presence of light. That was what Armin had once told Eren. Of course, it's a rather obvious statement itself but then when Eren would wake up at night, he was still able to make out the shapes of the room in the dark.

However, Armin then showed him the next day how it's impossible to see once light is completely blocked out.

Without any light, it's impossible to 'see'.

... so how did the Titans do it? How did they 'see' people as they sought out their prey?

Whenever he transformed, Eren could see the same as he would do normally, at least more or less so. He felt that whenever he was in his Titan form, that his vision was improved.

Not just through the eyes of his Titan, but even in his human form on the occasions when he would open his eyes and see the flesh which was bound all around him. It should be in total darkness, after all there was no source of light in such a place.

Yet he could see red everywhere. Blood vessels pumping and lightly pulsing in all directions, in and out of the tissues which connected around his eyes, burning his face.

So long as he let his consciousness drift up along those tissues connecting him, he could see through the eyes of his Titan.

But on the few occasions where Eren just let go of his focus, his mind would sometimes awaken inside the Titan's nape – or sometimes just in total darkness.

How did all the regular Titans see? Eren had considered it at one point, but before he knew it, he had forgotten it with everything that was going on around him. He remembered some of the abnormals he had seen in the past. Some of them, had not even turned their heads or their eyes before lashing out at people.

It's as if they didn't really need to. As if all the regular Titans just moved their eyes out of habit. As if they could just 'sense' when humans were there.

As if... there was something which only the Titans could 'see' – no, rather 'sense'. Something which humans couldn't see. Something which Eren could not see either.

... except when he was connected inside his Titan's nape. Sometimes, but only sometimes, he could have sworn to have seen **something**.

It was as if his vision just improved despite the absence of light. But before he could focus on it, his vision had gone. Every time he left his Titan form, provided that he wasn't unconscious, his vision would worsen.

Every time he transformed and left, it was as if the period for which his vision would blur was just slightly increased, and just slightly more blurry each time. Often just before he lost consciousness, but the fact of it remained.
Eren remembered how almost a decade ago, he had asked his father about his 'glasses'. Eren could hardly remember the conversation which followed, but he recalled how his father told him about how his sight had become blurrier over time.

The ability to see. If he lost that, how could he ever watch the passing clouds again in the sky. His father, Grisha, had then ruffled his son's hair affectionately and said that it wasn't the end of the world, and that he hoped his son would never need for such things.

This was of course slightly different. The length at which one could see was different from being able to see in a world without light.

There was however one absolute fact.

That one cannot see if there's absolutely no light.

It could be just a short glimmer or a brief spark, but that was all which was needed just to see in an instance. But without any, it was impossible.

Which meant, that there had to be light coming from somewhere as Eren tried to look around. He couldn't move at all, aside from shaking his head from side to side slightly. He was in a coffin, and he had woken up after feeling the rocking of the carriage which he was travelling in.

He had come to a halt just now. The plan had been seen through from the start, the moment the interior squad had walked up to him, just as Reeves had left with the intimidating man who was leading them.

He hadn't been awake for long, as a cold sweat began to take him. He wasn't claustrophobic, but more worried with how swiftly he had been restrained. Strong latches held his body together. He was panicking a little, and frustrated when he had no way to transform.

Just a cut, a single trickle of blood should be enough. Even a splinter perhaps. But he couldn't move. He couldn't do anything except watch in total darkness.

That was what had got him thinking. He could 'see'. There must be light coming from somewhere if he could make out the thin outline glowing of the two men who were carrying the coffin he had been placed in. It was impossible for him to see otherwise.

If he could peak outside, he might see where he was, and think what he might find to cut himself on. He felt the metal bar in his mouth, preventing him from biting his tongue.

But Eren could not see a single gleam of light anywhere. He was in total darkness, yet he could 'see' the two men bending down and placing his coffin on the floor before he felt the ground through his surroundings.

'What's going on?!' Eren's mind struggled to comprehend what was happening with his vision and what was about to happen to him, as a tall man's outline bent down to the side of the coffin and began working at the latches.

Light hit him for the first time, only after the lid had been lifted off. He exhaled sharply through the blockage to his mouth, straining his jaw as he felt slightly fresher air fill in.

"Hey, Eren," the top hat wearing man, who had lifted the cover off him, tried to assume a friendly tone, "hope the trip wasn't too rough."

Eren arched his back as he identified the man who had taken Reeves out. But his attention turned
immediately to his companion. Historia had likewise pushed herself out of her coffin, allowing Eren a small bout of relief that they were both safe for now.

'That's... Rod Reiss' Eren's thoughts and glare hardened as he recognised the man who was reaching to pull the gag away from his mistreated daughter, 'So this is the guy who's been getting in our way... the enemy of humanity. From what Historia has told us, he's an... irredeemable bastard!'

Historia glared up as she came to face with her father for the second time in her life. Coughing out as the gag was removed, she had the intention of spiting at the man's feet. Until...

"Historia. I'm sorry for everything." Rod spoke, tears beginning to swell just ever so slightly at his eyes. A form of ingenuity. A scene that looked as if a father had longed to see his daughter once more.

Eren's eyes widened, as he saw the man embrace Historia into a hug. The first hug and sign of affection which Historia had ever gotten from a parent.

Historia could feel it just as she was pulled into the shoulder of her father. She felt something else which she had never experienced. Something which she had desired for, since long ago.

The steady beat and the comfortably strong arms of a parent, embracing their child. She couldn't hold up the feeling swelling up in the form of droplets in her eyes.

Eren felt dizzy at the sight, not understanding what this meant. For an instance also... he recalled the time when his own father had done the same. He had tripped and fallen down the stairs just out from his house. Scraped knees, angle and hands to which blood had began forming immediately.

He had been angry at his mother for a silly reason no doubt, but not one which he could remember. His father had been at the door and had leaped down before crouching and lifting his 8 year old self up and bringing him back inside immediately.

Patches instantly brushed the blood away and strips of bandages were quickly wrapped around him. His father was a doctor after all, so the problem was quickly fixed, the child was scolded by his mother for not listening, and then embraced by both.

That was something which he knew Historia had never experienced from the story which she had told them. At that moment, he just couldn't understand. But he felt that his anger at the ruler, who was pulling the strings behind the walled world, was quelled.

The scene... felt far too real. He felt like he could not sense any deception in this act... though he felt something wrong about it nonetheless.

Eren turned to his right, sensing the man next time him holding a grave expression. He looked experienced as he oddly gazed into the glinting eyes examining his own. The man then swiftly brought out a short knife and cut off the bounds holding Eren's legs together.

"Kenny, what are you doing?" Rod had turned to face the soldier which served him. Kenny paid no heed to him as he continued. "Your orders are to take him down, not untie him."

"Right, right kingy," Kenny responded in a humoured mood as he lifted Eren out onto his feet, before pulling an adjusted cloth on top of Eren's head, shrouding him in darkness once more. "I ain't gonna let 'im run, ya know? Saves me the bother of carrying him this way, no problem with that amiright? Or don't ya trust me with something like this?"

Rod seemed to sigh before nodding and turning back to Historia, who was watching Eren stumble
as Kenny began leading him down around the corner of the building. Stone carefully lined and built around this whole place. A church of some sort was all she could say.

She turned back to her father, intending to say the first words to him which she had ever spoken. Eren. She should ask them to let Eren go. That was the first thought in her mind, before she shot it down immediately, knowing this wasn't going to happen... what was going to happen? Why was she and Eren being separated?

Historia didn't want to leave the comfort which Eren had shown her... but for some reason that feeling had lessened just now. It was because she felt a different kind of comfort, one which she had longed for.

"Historia, listen," her father began talking again, holding her shoulders warmly, "please give me a chance to explain everything. And then... we'll go to the place where it all began."

Her father swiftly cut off the restraints around her and reached out his hand to her, waiting patiently. Historia cast back to what Eren said earlier today – no, yesterday? That he was guilty for not stepping in sooner. She felt the same sort of thing now that Eren had disappeared.

Perhaps she should have asked immediately. But she didn't. Right now... she didn't know what to do. Right now... she gave in to her childhood wish.

"... okay."

Historia replied as her father pulled her up.

Eren was in total darkness once more, though he felt he was being led down a flight of stairs somewhere. "Down" - that was all which Rod Reiss had told this 'Kenny'. He didn't know anything about their relationship, but it was clear at least that he was one of his more influential subjects.

Eren had no way to speak, and had no idea where he was. The concrete floor gave away only two pairs of footsteps from what Eren could make out, however at the same time, his mind felt hazy. Become a Titan. That was what he needed to do, yet he felt the absence of any knives which he had hidden.

"Stop for a second would ya," Kenny's voice from behind him felt different from the slightly exaggerated tone it had been earlier. "Up and there ya go."

The cloth which covered his face was released and Eren once more found himself in the light. A soft amber from the candles which lined the wall down the spiralling staircase. The tall man, who was a couple steps above him, spun him round as he looked into Eren's eyes again.

Eren glared at the man, knowing that this was clearing an enemy he needed to deal with. He felt odd as if Kenny was trying to look into him, through his eyes, searching for something. His arms were still held together, but he could aim for a kick perhaps. No, space was limited and he would end up losing his balance and falling backwards no doubt.

Eren knew, but he decided he had to try it anyway. The only routes were up or down, but he didn't know what might happen if he transformed in between walls here. No even before that, he had no way to transform before this man would stop him if he tried scraping his skin against the wall or something like –

"Well... Uri?" Kenny spoke, addressing Eren by this name. "... are ya in there?"
Eren couldn't say anything but his eyes conveyed his confusion... and some semblance of familiarity as he heard that name...

"... Well, it's not like I can let ya talk, but tell me... just look at me and tell me like you did back then... that you're in there... Uri." Eren's confusion only multiplied with each passing moment as Kenny spoke. The old man looked like he was pleading for something which would tell him.

Those eyes. The ones which shone and spoke of knowledge and power yet told none of it, except that a monster dwelled within them, possessing that knowledge and power all for itself, refusing to share a single strand of it.

"Oi, oi, come on, won't ya tell me just one thing?" Kenny's annoyance took form with his joking voice, before settling down once more to become serious. "... hey, you remember that day by the lake right? That day a little while before yer time run out."

A lake. In the rich lands that was secured for the royal family. Sitting on the rotting log of a fallen tree. A misty morning.

Looking out into a tiny lake, like the small and cramped world within the walls. A wooden walking support resting on the shoulder. Watching... the 4 young ducklings which had landed and were gliding through the water at ease.

"... do ya still believe in that miracle as ya call it from back then?" The tall man in front of him, began feeling even familiar with him.

4 ducks... just floating across the surface of the small world which they take flight from at any moment. There would be no bits of food to find here in this lake, yet they had followed the leader of the group of 4 here, and even now, the others were gliding after him, waiting for the decision of their smallest member.

'In a not far-off future... this world will end...’ Who was the one who said that? The one who wishes to build a paradise for the few waning survivors. Eren could almost feel like he was in a scene which he had never experienced before, yet was all too familiar with.

"Violence was what made me come after ya, wasn't it? And it was that inevitable result which still somehow turned us into friends right?" Kenny sighed, seeing only a faint response drifting through his hostage's eyes. "... whatcha meant by that?"

The wind was slightly blowing, perpendicular to the paddling of ducks. It caused the lake to move in small waves onto the shore towards the two men sitting and watching the small body of water. Unaffected by the direction in which the small world which they were living in was flowing, the group continued their direction, not braking the silence of the water once.

"How did ya manage to keep talking with all that confidence like that? It was because ya had so much power that you had the freedom to right?" Kenny's words mostly went over Eren's ears as he felt his eyes in another world. "Ya got the power to just give me some proper last words right?"

They were swimming sidewards to the wind. It would surely be easier for them to just swim directly against the wind's direction. Going sidewards to it would only mean they are blown further down the way which the world was flowing.

"Power rivalling a god. Hey Eren, ya can fight with that power unlike them, but whatcha fighting for? Your compassionate in a different way though I'd say. What would happen to someone else
that ate ya?" Kenny's rambled on, hoping, grasping at any sign in Eren's eyes of the same monster which he had befriended.

Yet those 4 little ducklings, didn't change their direction. They followed on, following the ugly little duckling at the front, while the second was brushing down its feathers, in preparation for their next flight. None of the three however were going to move without their leader's call.

"I gotta now... What's it feel like? From your eyes, what does it look from up there? Could a piece of trash like me... see the same view as you did?"

Eren's vision returned to the present. The spiralling stone staircase from which neither of them hadn't moved. Kenny looked disappointed yet no less determined.

"So ya don't have the same eyes, do ya... Eren." The old man concluded, seeing the eyes of a monster lurking within... but not the same monster which he had once known. "If ya still in there somewhere, I'll be getting to see ya soon, Uri."

The young Titan shifter resumed his uncomprehending gaze but could not find the urge to glare at this man. It was only their second meeting aside from the day before, yet he felt he was familiar with this man somehow, not that he could mistake the older man's jokiness as friendly in the slightest.

"Well then, I guess I gotta stick to the old fatass's orders. It ain't anything personal, ya just don't have the shining white feathers of a special swan in your eyes like they did..."

Eren only remembered the last words before he blacked out, much later on. Was it even the old man who had hit his head with the barrel of his gun that was even speaking to him... or was it someone else...

"... You should take flight little duckling, as soon as ya can, away from that lake... remember though would ya. Ya best grow up fast if you want the power to fly somewhere far away... nah, it's already too late for ya. Or maybe ya never had the swan's white feather's to begin with..."

Bits of ups and downs in this chapter, in how I wanted to write something like 'this' since I think it would be pretty entertaining and more 'fun', however instead of cutesy sweetness, I did... this!

Ending Scene: WARNING MANGA SPOILERS - CONTAINS SPOILERS FOR SEASON 4 (OR WHAT WILL BE SEASON 4 AT LEAST)

A single road which would lead in one direction for the longest time. Any number of people might have walked down or up it.

A two forked road.

Sooner or later however, it would split into to paths and people would have to decide to either go one way or the other.

Their paths would separate, veering off in different directions.

Yet, sometimes they would meet back up later on, so long as the ones walking it would journey far enough.
The wounded soldier pulled out the note which had been hidden at the tree which was responsible for splitting the roads off.

It read, 'I know what you're doing.'

He realised instantly who it was from, since he had parted from the writer of it at a similar fork in the road a while back.

'Come back the way you came from now.'

He couldn't. He had travelled far too far down the road which he took to turn back.

'I know what you've often done behind my back.'

He would expect just as much.

'You won't find who you're searching for. You're paths have split since then. They won't meet again'

If the roads didn't eventually cross again later down, then he would make them. He would have to either turn the road's direction or make a new one, but he would make so that the paths crossed again.

'Come back now, and I'll forgive you.'

The wounded soldier dropped the note back at the tree which marked the fork on the road.

He chose his direction and continued, eyeing the person walking on the opposite path. The time was drawing near.

The wounded soldier didn't think he would be forgiven either way. But he hoped they would be understood once they reached the even larger two forked road.
Damn, 6 days late… think of an excuse, think of an excuse… hmm… give me a few hours the next day* … you get the picture, sorry for the delay! Only thing I can say is that since I do much of it on the weekends, when family turn out without notice and against your wishes, the hours are gone, and the headaches come in, and the day’s worth of sleeping comes after… and yeah! Hopefully this time now it can be a chapter a fortnight restarting now but sorry for the wait.

Originally, I had intended to retell the ‘revolution’ itself here and especially do the 104th cadet corp after Armin killed the first person from there, but instead just went with extracts. Also, just as a heads up, this chapter for certain is much lower in quality EreHisu content, since the whole ‘thought/action/character explanation parts have sort of become too dragged out, so I hope to tie things up as much as I could here – so please tell me if you find any bits rushed especially here!

The world, themes and the characters are basically the same as canon and while I will recap the characters themselves, I will focus more on the additional content as a result of Eren/Historia’s changes. So yeah, I decide to basically put the non-affected content to one side, since if you’ve read the manga and most of the anime covers it, its just going to be the canon story in written form, which I doubt is necessary. However, I have still inserted extracts since they parallel or contrast against other themes (whether in this chapter or referencing back to the previous or future ones) just for the sake of adding more context/ideas/symbolism etc beyond them.

Also sorry that I have not replied to some of the reviews on here, haven't been logging in lately, but I promise I will reply back in the morning (for me!)

Discord invite: https://discord.gg/csQFFUC

"speech"

'thoughts' - Italics

---

**Chapter 6 - Erinnerungen**

**Late Spring of the Year 849 – Noon Of the 3rd Day after Departure**

*Eren hated those who would prey on the week. What gave them the right to strike at those whom they pleased?*

*He hated it and he hated them. At first, Eren hadn't been the sort to step in when he saw the weak refusing to fight back.*

*Until that day of course.*

*It would be foolish to simply endure and let their oppressors treat them how they wanted.*
would stay as the weak forever if they didn't fight back.

He wasn't like them. Eren wasn't weak. He told himself that over and over again. He couldn't afford to be weak if he was to fight the greater oppressors soon.

In about a year's time he would be ready. He wasn't going to be the weak kid who was saved back then. He'd be the one to wipe out the Titans, one by one.

Eren hated bullies. They were just as low as his enemies. Just like back then. He was different. He had just proven that to himself.

He didn't need Mikasa running in to save him anymore. He could do it. He would conquer everything he couldn't back in his past. He had just taken the first step to it.

The Titans would pay. Anyone who stood in his way and tried to encase him would pay.

Eren wasn't weak anymore.

He wouldn't be weak ever again.

He wouldn't break. He wouldn't break.

Eren couldn't possibly lose after what he saw that day. He could never possibly lose against a Titan.

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 – On the Day which Eren and Historia were Captured by Kenny**

"Aah," the small blond gasped as his knees fell to the ground and tears flooded down his cheeks, overwhelmed by the pressure that had seized his entire body. "Ugh!"

His whole arm was being pressed against the hard bark of the tree as the weight of his body desperately sought much needed support. Armin felt his stomach turning, as he tried to fend away the disgust sweeping throughout and causing him to recoil in all directions.

"Blegh!" He couldn't hold it in any longer, as he gurgled out his digested sustenance from the morning, just as he heard the distance crunches on the grass, signaling the footsteps from somewhere far away. The sounds felt so distance, yet his childhood friend reached him instantly.

"Armin!" Mikasa had come running over, out of the abandoned shack which they had taken refuge in. The members of Squad Levi, excluding Eren and Historia, were all present within. They were all alive.

Jean was alive, because of Armin.

Mikasa looked at his delicate, trembling form, as he continued retching uncontrollably. What should she say? That everything was alright? It wasn't. She hesitantly took another step forward and sympathetically patted her hand on Armin's back, trying to comfort him. Armin's coughing subsided as his throat became clear again, but the convulsions did not.

"Mikasa… did this happen, to you too…?" Armin gasped, body quaking, begging for reassurance. It felt wrong to Armin. It felt so wrong that he wanted to cower away from the world and hide somewhere deep so that no-one would see him.

"…!…. um..." Mikasa was alarmed. She didn't know what to say. She had to say something
comforting. But she didn't know what to say.

She couldn't offer the response he needed. She couldn't bring herself to lie about such things to Armin. It was an odd balance in her mind which she realised, between what was the 'right' answer. The honest answer or the comforting answer? She didn't know which was the right one.

"Ah…! ah..." Armin trembling intensified as he understood how it was different. Mikasa didn't feel the same sort of disgust as the sort he felt for himself. The cogwheels in his head began to turn, the reality of this difference taking its roots. "I'm sorry... Mikasa!"

He was sorry that he had asked such a question. It was a sensitive topic, and he didn't want to stir any complicated feelings for Mikasa as to why she didn't feel any repentance.

"It's okay," Mikasa tried, rubbing his back softly as his crying continued ceaselessly. She didn't know what else to say, but she continued rubbing light circles around his back until he calmed down. He own self blame taking its form.

She hadn't been in time to save Jean. That was why Armin had to do it. Why? Why wasn't she fast enough. This was the second time now after she had failed to be fast enough in grabbing the MP they were supposed to capture from the cliff. As a result they had been delayed by a day. As a result, Armin was feeling like this.

She remembered then. Cracked ribs from barely more than a week ago. They had healed exceptionally quickly. She could move properly, she could perform the same as always, she was in peak physical condition. Or so she told everyone.

Yet she had failed to make a distance she could easily have made. Just like Jean saved her in the battle after sh was about to be crushed. She could have done it, yet she had failed again. She needed to make it next time. She needed to be fast enough next time. Her injuries were the only reason she had failed. There was nothing else, nothing else at all. Except for...

"I'm sorry..." Armin squeaked out again, barely managing to keep the stench of the liquid in his throat from choking him as he failed to bite back even more tears.

He was sorry that Mikasa must be feeling bad now. If he had only been strong like she and Eren were, this wouldn't have been happening. He had cast aside this wish to be like them over a month ago, having realised that his friends always saw him as an equal. But, he still wished he could have performed better. If he wasn't so easily overwhelmed, Mikasa wouldn't have that troubled expression.

"I'm sorry..."

But most of all, he was sorry to the person he killed.

"I'm... sorry..."

And he knew no amount of apologizing could change that. So he was sorry for not knowing what else to say.

Late Spring of the Year 849 – Afternoon Of the 3rd Day after Departure

Apprehensive. If anyone, who knew Bertholdt well, had to choose a single word to describe him on every day, they would say Bertholdt always seemed apprehensive. On the exterior, he always looked scared of something, uncertain of other things, and anxious about everything.
On the inside, the reasons behind how he behaved lurked, bound by inescapable guilt. There were times when he felt like confessing everything.

Just admitting to everything he had done, and accept anything which would be done to him as retribution.

But he decided that he couldn't just yet. That would be a far too easy of an escape for him, so long as the world was wishing for it, he would continue suffering as he now was.

It hurt. Every time he looked at the comrades around them, every time he tended to them, he knew that in a time not too distant, he would have to take the mantle of the incursion once again.

It was the role he had been given after all. The oncoming firestorm would summon him to lead it soon. But for now, he had been entasked with taking care of one of his victims. Someone who had suffered because of him, and would suffer again because of him.

"Hey, Krista," Reiner tried to speak once again, "what the hell happened to you?"

Bertholdt finished wrapping the bandage around her ankle. The girl had clearly been hit multiple places over and there were bruises present all over her body. Her face had at least managed to not get hit since she clearly had tried to protect herself, though her arms had been in a concerning state, and it hurt too much to move her right arm even slightly.

"Krista, tell us," Reiner seethed, clearing biting back his fury at whoever had harmed her, "we're your comrades right?"

Krista had been keeping her silence the whole time, only whimpering in response at trying to hide herself behind her tears.

Bertholdt and Reiner had shown up quickly enough, having gotten the information they needed and found Annie glaring at them when they showed up, having herself used up all of her own storage to make Krista a sling for her right arm.

She instructed them to fetch their own and tend to her, as she turned away, Reiner calling after her to try and explain what was going on.

Krista had not spoken a word, and Annie had not yet returned. The small blonde girl had a sullen look plastered on her, that felt the complete opposite of her usual character.

He wanted to ask. But, Bertholdt felt it would be wrong to, after what he himself had done. What he knew he would have to do.

"Um, Reiner..." Bertholdt began, wishing to help out Krista who clearly didn't want to answer, "maybe we shouldn't be asking her that... right now..."

It wasn't exactly a topic they could avoid when one of their comrades had been attacked, but Bertholdt decided to step up, seeing the look Krista held.

"... yeah, you're right," Reiner nodded to his friend and turned to Krista as he offered her a hand, "I'm sorry Krista. I was being insensitive."

Krista simply nodded, wiped her tears and accepted his arm, just as she stumbled and Reiner supported her up.

It was odd, to both of them. If she was in her normal state, then she'd have managed a strained yet
happy filled smile and hopped up in gratitude.

Whatever had happened, the problem had run deep. Bertholdt looked around, examining the place, the horses hadn't been moved, nor had any of their luggage seemingly been stolen, only a spilled bucket of water which had seemed to have dampened the small cadet in question.

While he was looking around, at that moment, Eren had appeared, almost out of thin air.

"Eren, Annie's gone off somewhere without telling us anything, but more importantly," Reiner said, "do you know what happened to Krista?"

The brunette stopped in his tracks before them as his eyes fell on Krista who was struggling to stand up, who instantly averted her own.

"It's..." Eren began. It obviously was something to worry about if Krista had been beaten up like that.

Eren began making a scrutinizing glare at the ground before he sighed and looked at Krista again, then to Reiner.

"If she doesn't want to talk, then we can't make her." The one who responded was not Eren, but Annie who had managed to sneak up behind them at some point.

"Oi, Annie where did you go off to?" Reiner inquired suddenly. "No, wait that can wait, we are comrades aren't we? We should be informed about the circumstances when something like this happens!"

Annie snorted in response when Reiner uttered something like 'comrades' to her, feeling slightly sickened. She had gathered the basics of what had happened when she saw left back to the abandoned warehouse where Eren had finished 'dealing' with the three individuals.

They had been returning a few minutes earlier, while Annie was examining every person and had been distracted when Eren had run off. This was their target spot after all, of the true noble family of Reiss, which she had learned from eavesdropping on the same wall religion leaders as Ymir herself had.

Their child had entered the 104th cadet corps. 'Krista Lenz'. It was quite clear as she had observed her throughout the whole journey to her side. The closer they drifted towards this place, the more troubled her expression had gotten.

However, Krista Lenz was clearly not the Founding Titan, nor would she be of any actual help if questioned given her past. However, she herself might be recognized. That was why Annie had been making sure to study each and every one of the people in town, for any sign.

She knew what her mission was. There was no fault in her conviction to see it through to the end, even if she had to crush those she had become attached to in order to succeed.

While distracted though, Eren had seemed to catch sight of something and ran off without her. He had then exited from the half destroyed building round the corner, and was supporting Krista out with his hands practically carrying her by her better shoulder.

She saw the injuries that the smaller blonde had received, yet it paled nothing to the look in her eyes. The eyes of someone who was torn, uncertain of what to do. Annie herself, the so often called cold hearted ice queen, immediately set to tending her fellow cadet's hits, not that she could do much to quell the pain of bruising.
As soon as Reiner and Bertholdt appeared, returning from their own location which they had went off to search, she quickly went to the direction Eren had returned to.

She witnessed the last move Eren had made which caused the two cowering men to break down. It was a mess. Eren had gone off and made a situation which would be difficult to gain any source of information from them. She cursed herself, despite how cruel it may have sounded, that she hadn't prioritized Krista's welfare above the necessity of the information, though she felt like she wouldn't have gotten much out of crones like them either way.

Why? Why had she decided to tend to the needs of this struggling lonely girl?

Annie sighed, focusing on Reiner as Krista felt uncertain of what to say with Reiner helping her out as he was now.

"We all have things that we would rather not reveal. You don't really know girls all that well do you." Annie's cold statement rung true to Reiner's core. She first hinted at their own, and then at something to cover her first statement.

"Ah..." Reiner responded, managing to catch on, "yes... sorry again Krista, I was being insensitive."

This time, Krista shook her head and smiled up to him, "I-it's alright."

Her beaming shine had returned as Reiner felt an odd tinge in happiness, and the direction of the conversation changed.

"Right, can you walk on your own?" Reiner asked.

Krista nodded, trying to reassure him as she forced her body to wake up and take a careful step forward. She wobbled but managed it, freeing herself from Reiner's support, she took another step forward, smiling to show everyone that she was fine. She took another and then fell.

She ended up falling right towards Eren, who seemed to respond with a great deal of delay yet somehow managed to stop the girl from hitting the hard ground again.

"K-Krista? Are you really going to be okay?" Reiner panicked as he held his arm out, trying to reach her.

Krista had collapsed onto her knees, and with only one sore arm able to support herself with, she would have hit her face onto the ground for sure. Eren had in the last moment managed to grasp her shoulders awkwardly.

She looked up at him, placing her free arm onto his own as she trembled and pushed her body up. Krista looked up at him. To thank him. Not as Krista would. But because some older darker part of her felt like she should thank him for what he had done.

It was the second time she had been saved in her life. By the same person again.

Instead, Eren had already turned his face completely away, and guided her over to the fence next to where they were gathered, and let her support herself on it.

"Well, in any case... Reiner, Bertholdt, did you find this chapel we're supposed to be going to?" Eren turned his attention to the taller boys.

"Oh, yeah, its hidden to the north-west of the town down that way," Reiner answered. He had after
all managed to search through it thoroughly before he had Bertholdt returned. Nothing of value had been found.

The Wall church had seemed connected to the entire aristocracy who were ruling at the capitol, however in these lands at least, the church had few staff and itself felt rather small. There was no sign of anything titan related nor knowledge of the Reiss family besides being the ones who own the farmlands around.

They had at least managed to confirm that this was their destination from the nun who was at work and expecting the mounts to be placed into the stables. But –

"Krista… you're going to have to ride with one of us… at least until Orvud district since we can't leave you here..." Eren stated, uncertainly making eye contact with her.

"Ah, don't worry about me, I'm fine with going all the way. There's no way I can let everyone fail just because of me!" Krista resolutely said. But if it came down to it, if she rides with Eren then it would at least give her the best chance to thank him. No more than that, she needed to answer him.

"Huh? What are you talking about Krista?" Eren looked at her confused, and found the same befuddlement in Krista's own eyes. It dawned on him as he continued, "oh, do you not remember what the directive said?"

"Eh?" Krista responded, lightly shaking her head. 'Ouch' she bubbled internally, feeling a pain in her neck suddenly sting as she shook her head to quickly.

" 'Return to the training camp promptly and report your return to the chief instructor to complete your mission.' That was what was written," Reiner quoted from memory as he picked up the explanation to Krista, "in other words, it doesn't specify that we all need to be present. So long as one of us reports that 'Squad 8' has completed the task, that is all that is required."

Krista caught onto what was being implied. In other words, her group were not going to push her any further than the closest best destination. Orvud district was an outlier district of Wall Sina after all, so sufficient treatment would surely be provided until her body was no longer aching all over.

But –

"B-but, if I can help in s-some way then I won't end up being a burden to everyone, right?" Krista managed. She didn't want to be left like that, and simply told to wait until she gets better. Krista was not allowed to take a break from being Krista. "I c-could negotiate with people, its something I am a bit good at, r-right?"

But more than that, Krista needed to thank Eren. Properly. Not forcing herself out like she always did, but truthfully thanking him.

"No." Eren's statement felt absolute as did the seemingly complete agreement from the three other members of her group which Krista looked to, trying to find someone to argue her case. "It's not about being a burden or not. You're not in any condition to be moving after what happened just now."

"B-but, if there's anything I can do, I've got t-" Krista tried once again, facing Eren and pleading to him as he stared back uncomfortably.

"No. Unless there's a reason why Orvud District is just as bad, that's where you'll be staying until you get better." Eren dug his foot firmly down on the topic. Krista didn't back down, but she was
on the verge of tears once more.

Eren noticed this, shook his head and immediately turned away. He began giving the instructions for them to move out, which Krista couldn't stand to listen to.

Why? If it was anyone else, even if Krista would have been in such a state, they would have not been able to deny her pleas. In truth, they would probably offer to carry her to wherever she wished while proclaiming how it's such an honour to help a goddess.

Why was Eren so different?

He saved her, yet he denied her. He would listen to her, yet he could resist her. He chose to help, yet he chose to push her away.

Krista herself didn't know what to think about him. She just didn't know what he truly thought of her either.

There was only one other anomaly when it came to people treated her.

Ymir.

It had been nary 6 months ago when Ymir had revealed to her how she figured out her secret. Or a part of it at least. She had been frozen, colder than the snow flying around them as Ymir had told her how she was just trying to die as a martyr.

It was half correct. She was going to die one way or another after all. There was nothing she could do to escape from it. Yet in some form, she had still been moving forward, intending to get Daz through. Even if Ymir had walked on ahead, she would have kept on going. After all, if she actually saved Daz by a miracle, she would fulfill her role as a kind-hearted girl.

Even if there had been one single mishap in the past with a certain other brunette, she could still say she had fulfilled her role until the end.

But even after she had gotten off that mountain in safety, even though Ymir had become aware of a large part of her, yet their relationship had improved. It was difficult to say what they exactly were now, however Ymir despite knowing her the best, instead sought to help her out, to point things out to her, and to suggest what she would do.

So why? Why was Eren so different? He was completely different from Ymir as well.

No matter how much she thought about it, she just couldn't come to a conclusion for the whole day. She had been far too sore to risk riding on her own force and remaining properly balanced, and so she had to ride with Annie, much to the elder girl's evident irritation, though she tried to conceal it.

Annie was after all the next lightest after herself, and so had to uncertainly keep her remaining arm firmly around the terrifying girl's waist. But she held herself as the group began on the move as she stopped paying attention to what was going around her again.

She couldn't hear what anyone else was saying, she didn't notice that they had already rode to the chapel, had Reiner chase down a nearby priest who bore the necklace to indicate his allegiance, and got on the move again.

She could have sworn a man had passed her, glancing at her from beneath his black longcoat and top hat, before losing interest.
That was the only moment she noticed anything again for the remainder of the nightfall. She had seen Annie’s mouth move, but the sounds not reaching her ears as they began riding at a dangerously fast pace.

Annie turned to her a few times, as if trying to say something with her narrowed eyes alone, as if realising that mere words were not going to reach Krista's ears.

Her eyes had been trained on his back for the whole time, as he motioned Reiner to take the lead, seemingly more familiar with the land they were traversing after they had gone off road. It was probably a very dangerous move in case they lost their bearing, however, Krista didn't care.

She probably wouldn't have managed to suggest anything better if she even did care, however she didn't.

In the morning, Eren had saved her, castigated her, and then decided matters for her. She frankly didn't know what to think.

There was also one underlining concern which she had to speak to Eren about. Unlike Ymir, he hadn't promised anything to her about keeping quiet as to what happened.

Krista frankly didn't want to bring it back up, but she felt she had to. She couldn't let anything damage how the other cadets viewed her, as a failure to Krista.

And then it was Eren himself again. What did he see her us?

Krista couldn't understand him. Krista decided that she could never possibly understand him. There was no way that Krista possibly could.

The distant drumming of horse hooves upon the steepe. The curses of Eren as his horse stumbled, clearly tired. The pain which burned just as much as in the morning, when she could have been broken even further.

All of it felt distant and far off, as if they belonged in a land of reality where having muscles pulled stung, where having your abdomen kicked made your stomach sick, where getting your fingers trodden on created the fear of being crushed further along your body.

Instead she was in an unknown land, though not entirely disconnected from the one she had come from. In it, she could only feeling the iron determination of Eren to ignore her piercing stare at his back.

She didn’t know how she knew, but she knew. She knew that Eren could feel her gaze.

Bolting down the slightly downwards inclined slope, leaping across the tiny crossing brooks. Ahead and over little hills, into the slightly frost piercing land.

The ground was harder, growing more akin to a tundra, though nowhere near close enough to a proper one either.

The gargantuan monolith that was the wall outcropped into an oval like fashion as they all adjusted their course slightly in the darkening sky. The clouds had covered much of it again today, though there was no sign of rain at least.

A bleak and pale sky all above them. They had made it to Orvud District just before the night took over completely.
Krista was not any closer to knowing what Eren thought of her. That was all that mattered. If she could find out anything to make him see her as the kind-hearted girl she is meant to be, then that's all that mattered.

She could not possibly understand Eren. There was no way she ever could in any world.

There was no way Krista could ever understand Eren.

Because she was still Krista.

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 – Royal Palace in the Capitol Mithras**

He upturned his good working right eye upwards.

"Erwin Smith," the chief magistrate spoke from the group of four nobles sitting in their respective seats perpendicular to the fake king right in front of the commander, "do you have any last words?"

His left eye and been bruised and blackened by the blow he had been dealt during his so called interrogation. It was throbbing slightly, as well the countless hits that his body had taken. Chains bound his legs, rendering him from any hope of escape.

In front of him, were those who blocked the path to his dream.

Erwin was not affected in the slightest by his body's condition. In the face of those who governed this cramped world behind the walls, his conviction was untouchable.

"What protects humanity is not the shield which guards it. But the spear which eliminates the threats before it."

---

**Late Spring of the Year 849 – Morning of the 4th Day after Departure**

Eren stretched his body as he pulled himself out of his bunk. It was colder than most mornings here. His body had goose bumps all over as he rubbed his hands together to create a bit of warmth between them.

He was in the military barracks after they had arrived in the city yesterday. It wasn't quite as large as the ones of his own training camp on the south, but they felt significantly more empty.

Soldiers of the garrison had often previously been trainees in either the North, East, South or West divisions of each of their numbered training corps. The training camps were, as far as Eren knew, all located within Wall Rose, even before the fall of Wall Maria.

Their own group was the 104th corps, meaning they were the 104th batch since the day the titans appeared, since each group was gathered every year. Eren had never seen any 103rd or 105th batch although from rumours, he had heard that there were several academies located in each of the four cardinal directions from Mithras.

103 generations had been passed of training soldiers. After 103 generations, of but a select few going to the MPs, the majority to the Garrison and a variable number to the Survey Corps, the military forces of humanity had never once been able to defeat the titans in a single battle.

103 generations and no-one had been strong enough to wipe out the titan threat. Eren was different. He reminded himself of what he felt back then. Defeat, sorrow and hatred. He would be
different than any other soldier, he would be the one to wipe out the titans. He wasn't weak like that. He couldn't be.

Eren shrugged himself and threw back the covers in a neat-ish fashion. He slipped his boots on and left the hall, eyeing all the empty beds. Reiner and Bertholdt themselves were still sleeping in the beds adjacent to his, bathing in what was going to be a short lived comfort.

As Eren opened the door leading outside to the city, he had not counted more than a dozen soldiers present and asleep. It was still early morning, and the lack of people outside was an obvious sign that aside from potential night guards, there couldn't have been many if any at all soldiers who had already began their days.

His first sight was the almost empty paths throughout the city in the light morning. Some birds went about singing their gentle song from the roofs of houses nearby, chirping happy away. Eren walked by labourers who moved rhythmically across the streets, following their regular routine.

Small iron work houses and manufacturing factories, cotton mills and tailor ships along with early opening bakeries and market stalls were being entered or attended to by workers and customers alike.

Fieldwork was naturally also the key work, however it was dealt with more often by the poorer workers who lived on the outside of the wall, just at the gate of the Wall Rose territory. In the cities here, work had more variety, yet was no better paid than on the outside.

Or to Eren until recently, it made them no less cowardly than anyone else who felt content to live behind the walls in fear. Though, such thoughts had eased up in his mind since the day before. He had realised it then.

Eren sighed as he came to a stop of his aimless wandering. He didn’t have any destination in mind, and instead just decided to go for a walk to wherever the streets would take him.

"Hey, you'll pay for that you bastard!" Eren heard the voice of a child yelling in an alleyway nearby.

A light brown haired boy with hair combed to both sides was desperately trying to pick a fight against three older boys. He was clearing losing, yet even so he kept his fists clenched and tried throwing his punches as strongly as possible.

They were all easily counter-attacked and the 9 year old boy hit the ground, gasping out from having the air knocked out of him.

"Hey, why don't you say that again you punk?" One of the bullies taunted. "What was your problem again, I've already forgotten."

"Why you! You broke my best friend's glasses again!" The boy shot at them in anger. "Do you know how expensive they are to get?!"

"Nope!" the three boys laughed between each other, finding the younger boy's cries amusing to their ears. "Can't say we do, its not our fault your family are peasants to our otherwise clean town."

The boy pushed himself up on his legs again, as he glared up and seethed at the older boys, only around 3 years his senior. He intended to strike them again, with every intent of bringing them down. He knew it wouldn't be enough from the countless experiences, but he decided to d it anyway. However there was no need to.
"I swear..." The 14 year old soldier came walking in as he quickly identified the three boys at roughly 12 year olds, the tallest of whom was his height, "it's always three of you."

"H-huh? Military cadet?" The instant the three boys saw him, they began backing off. Eren's glare by itself felt like it was pushing them back.

"Get lost, or I'll personally deal with you," he threatened, not in the mood to have to put more people in their place. He was still frankly tired after having to deal with them. And really, even if he wouldn't go anywhere as far as what he did yesterday, beating up another set of kids wasn't going to go without notice as the morning sun rose steadily.

The boys scattered soon after in the opposite direction. 'I wonder... how they will turn out in another several years...' Eren thought as he watched their backs.

He wished that they wouldn't. He wished that they would not turn out like the pigs he had seen so much of. They were everywhere, in every city, town or large group. To cure such a thing in Eren's mind, he would have to find and personally deal with every last one of them throughout the walls.

An impossible task one way or another. The better solution was to therefore change them.

It was their fault.

If only the Titans didn't exist, then mankind would not have to live in fear behind the walls. If only, they all knew what freedom was like, they would understand.

Eren was going to massacre the Titans. He had promised to do so time and time again. He would never break his promises.

But, in the meantime –

"Hey," Eren leaned down over to the average brown haired kid who was brushing his pain away from the heavy punch he received. "You alright?"

The boy looked up with his equally brown eyes as he took the hand of his helper as he was pulled up.

"... how..." the young boy mumbled as Eren waited him to finish, already anticipating what he might say, "... how can I stand up to them... like you do?"

Eren clasped his arm on the boy's shoulder, making him jump. "You fight back... you fight back... and you don't stop fighting back."

The boy looked at him with uncertainty and said, "but... I ended up like this again... and it will probably be the same next time... mister... how do get eyes like that?"

"Huh? Eyes?" It was Eren's turn to be surprised, feeling as if in the moment, something dissipated from them.

"No... I'm sorry, nevermind," the boy spoke, looking down on the floor, "thank you for helping me mister. I'll... fight again next time... but... they'll probably end up breaking or stealing my friend's glasses or hairband again...

Eren sighed, knowing the boy was right. Knowing before he said it, that there was not much he could say. It all rested in the boy's own hands to fight back... and to somehow win."Yeah... that's right... you'll need to get stronger... how old are you?"
"O-oh, I'm nine," the boy replied, preparing to leave. His mother would no doubt be expecting him in the morning, and there was no point delaying the scoldings he would get and be groomed back up, telling him how he can't go looking like that when his father was a wealthy businessman.

"… I see, then in three years then, apply for the cadet corps, and then join the Survey Corps," Eren suggested. "You'll get stronger that way."

"H-huh me? But I'm… you mean, join the fight against the Titans?" The boy inquired, wobbling a little at the prospect. "I… I don't know… my parents won't approve… and… I've never even seen one… they've always sounded in the stories they tell… too…"

His mother didn't either. But she was gone now. Because he wasn't strong enough.

Eren nodded, "well, its just a suggestion. But you may see it some day… that you can't stay in these walls forever, you… we all need to fight back… and you'll become stronger that way…"

"What about you mister? Are you going to join the Survey Corps?" The boy noticed the crossed twin swords emblem instead of the wings of freedom on his jacket.

"Yeah," Eren smiled confidently, "but you better hurry, by the time you join, I'll have wiped out half of those damn monsters."

He spoke in earnest. And the younger boy could see that as his eyes gazed in wonder.

"Okay… I'll think about it," the boy smiled happily, feeling an odd sense of strength fill him up just by seeing the older boy, "thank you again mister…?"

"Eren, its just Eren." The older brunette smiled in response kindly.

"Ah, thank you Eren! I'm Ludvig!" The young brunette 'Ludvig' declared, "I don't know if the military will work out… but I'll fight back as I always have."

Eren nodded, utterly content at the boy's words as he decided to walk the boy home as he chatted a little. Eren had naturally avoided any sensitive topic, however he told him how he was from Shinganshina and was there that day.

Before long, he had to part ways at the boy's house as he was waved off.

'That's right… its not like you even have to be a soldier to know what you have to do… but, if you have chosen to become a soldier, there's no bloody reason to cower away from it,' Eren's thoughts darkened, changing as he located his actual source of frustration at his squad member, 'what's with that act of hers… who does she think she's fooling… she couldn't look anymore forced down a path she didn't want to go down… yet she remained defiant to anything except it all the same…'

He almost pumped into a large, burly, blond man who suddenly appeared from around the corner.

"H-hey, Reiner, what are you doing here?" Eren stopped abruptly before him, identifying him easily.

"Sorry about that, I followed you out just after you left." Reiner rubbed his hand on the back of his head, "did you mark our arrive at the messaging relay fellow?"

"O-oh, that's right," Eren panicked, realising he had forgotten. They had arrived late last evening, and had no chance to drop in at the military offices since they had closed down several hours before.
"Well then, I can go see to that for you if you'd like," Reiner assured him, "we should head out again soon, like I said yesterday, we need to circle round Yarckel district since they won't allow us trainees into Wall Sina even when we're authorised with a mission like this. Typical bastards right?"

"Yeah… um, Reiner… which way is it back?" Eren asked innocently. Reiner raised an eyebrow, realising that Eren must have been too engrossed with conversing to the boy he had seen him with.

"Well, that would… be the… direction… that… I..." Reiner turned and pointed down the curving road with several alleyways open at the same angle which his arm was outreached.

They had taken their eyes off their surroundings for a moment, and within a city as large as Orvud, it had not ended well.

They had been wandering for nearly an hour until someone had managed to help them out, albeit unpleasantly since they had disturbed them from their morning routine at the shop they were opening up.

They stood outside the military headquarters. A fort like building that was amongst the tallest in every district city, aside from the churches and some of the noble owned buildings. The barracks were always stationed nearby.

Eren and Reiner had arrived once again to find it closed, much to their grievances. They were practically seething in rhythm with each other after walking around the city non-stop to only be rewarded with more waiting.

They sighed simultaneously.

After returning back to the barracks, they sat on their respective temporary bunks again, deciding to straighten the covers and put everything back the way they found it, as they waited or Bertholdt, who was in a full blanket embracing sleep.

"Hey, Eren," Reiner broke the pleasant silence as Eren hummed in response, "… I take it you know what happened to Krista yesterday?"

Eren froze up. "…yeah, but I don’t kno–"

"Oh, you don't need to answer," Reiner said. Eren turned to Reiner in surprise, finding his older friend sitting on his bed, arms placed on his thighs. "It's fine, if Krista doesn't feel comfortable in telling us, then its something that I shouldn't know perhaps."

Reiner folded his arms, inclining his head up to look at the ceiling, "just… I'm concerned about her. I m-mean, everyone from our trainee group is like that, its natural to want to protect a sweet and gentle girl like that right?"

"No," Eren simply said.

"Right? I mean, have you seen the way sh– " Reiner registered Eren's reply and looking at him incredulously.

"... What?!" Reiner looked aghast, "how can you say that Eren! There's no world in which you could possibly say 'no' to– . Wait, could it actually be?! Are you and Mikasa actu–"

"No," Eren sighed, putting his hand on his forehead as he wandered over in front of Reiner, "why does everyone think that. Besides Reiner, you clearly don't have a good eye when it c– "
“Eren.” Reiner fixed him a serious look. "Could it be, that you're into guys?"

"No, Reiner, I feel like this conversation has stra– " Eren tried to veer back to the original topic. But Reiner hadn't finished.

"Armin."

"H-huh?"

"Everyone has eyes for someone. You like Armin don't you?"

"W-what? No, this isn't – "

"Jean then."

"… what sort of death wish do you exactly have?!"

"It's called hate flirting, you still have much to learn." Reiner chided him, taking on the appearance of a wise teacher, "alright, so it might be a girl then?"

"No, Reiner, there's not anyone I have eyes on, nobody at all!" Eren's patience was thinning.

"Ann– " Reiner ignored him and continued suggesting, but was cut off with a pillow being thrown at him.

Eren snarled at him, having sneaked past him and thrown Reiner's own pillow at him, messing up his carefully laid out bed again.

Reiner laughed, "sorry, sorry only kidding, but you know if you ever want to reveal your secret, I've got you covered."

Eren stared back at him knowingly. Although Reiner wouldn't go around gossiping that sort of thing, it was clearly going to be used as a teasing of bargaining for mutual secrets chip.

"Now, back to Krista," the serious gravity returned to Reiner as he spoke, "I saw the kind of hits she had taken. Three people, a couple years older than her probably at the very least."

"… yeah," Eren hesitantly responded, "they've been taken care of, I can assure you of that."

"Alright, I can rest easy knowing you dealt with it," Reiner approved, "I don't know what it is you did, but I guess if Krista didn't want to say, its best to not go round sharing it."

Eren relaxed, knowing that Reiner was being considerate with not pressure him for details.

"Just, make sure to talk through it with Krista, alright?" Reiner changed tact.

"Huh?" Eren didn't like the sound of it. He was frankly no less disapproving of the young blonde's actions than the day before.

"I saw that there's some complication between you two, with whatever happened to her," he continued, "just… make sure you talk things through so that I can rest assured that she's truly feeling alright, after whatever bastards she had to deal with, when the bright shine of her smile returns again."

Reiner smiled bitterly. He had been taking notice of both Eren and Krista since then.
"... yeah, alright," Eren conceded. He wasn’t exactly looking forward to it. But... he felt he needed to reconcile in some manner or other. He hated how she could say such things after what could have happened to her, yet Eren still felt a bit different after this morning when he thought back to it.

Perhaps... he had been too focused on his own thoughts... that was what he had thought when the boy he had met a short while ago, had spoken his wavering resolve. It was different from Krista, who's thoughts defied Eren's logic.

But... he felt like maybe... just maybe... he should give her one chance to say something to defend herself...

"But don't take this the wrong way, Eren," Reiner's attitude changed again, "I'm not conceding in the long run or anything at all! If you start getting lovie dovie eyes for an angel, then you gotta talk to me first!"

"... wh, no its not like that," Eren deflated, "there's no chance in hell that I would get together with someone like her."

"Wh-what! What's wrong with her, do you have something wrong with Krista!?!" Reiner's tone became humorously accusative again, and Eren knew that deep down, he was only being teased.

But still, Reiner had god awful standards. Eren continued with the song and dance Reiner made, finding a sense of amusement in the pointlessness.

Reiner was out of his mind. There was no way that Eren would ever end up with the short blonde girl, born on the 15th of the first month of the year.

There was no world in Eren could ever possibly like a single thing about the existence of that girl. No way, none at all.

Through it all, Bertholdt had slept on.

The 5th Day after Departure

Things were going smoothly. The had to be. They were now making a proper amount of progress. They had left Orvud district on the day before, and by luck and careful navigation, they had been able to make the whole trip into Yarckel District.

Their cumbersome eye bags from the first couple of days had faded away, replaced with strong determination to see it through to the end. Their pace had been fast yet smooth. The terrain was more mountainous on the western circumference of Wall Sina, however they had managed well enough, despite the issues at hand.

They had spent the night in much warmer beds again, before then once again, making their way round to Ehrmich District, on the south side of Wall Sina. They had set out in the morning again, rushing through the powerful winds which had began as fast as they could.

They were going to make it in time. A stupid one week training size around the entirety of Wall Sina. It was nothing short of stupidity.

He kept repeating it to himself. He had barely gotten any sleep in the nights, being forced to stare at the ceiling of loosely held together canvas as he found himself unable to settle into sleep.
This was all for their titan and military training. This would surely be valuable in the long run. Succeeding in this is the only step forward.

His mind cast back to Krista.

He couldn't fail. He couldn't fail. He couldn't fail.

Eren kept repeating it through his head, trying to give his motivation focus. In truth, he much rather be practicing ODM gear training, knowing he still has more crucial progress which had to be made with the angle and depth of his strikes. However, this test should surely also help him.

He couldn't fail. He couldn't fail. He couldn't fail.

He could have sworn he heard several shouts calling out his name, just before his mind faded to black and he let gravity take over and the heat that had been tormenting his body for the past few days to take over.

Eren groaned as he tried to sit himself up. As he did so, he slowly opened his eyes to the smell of burning wood as he saw the small campfire

His head felt like it was splitting open, the moment he moved a single muscle, and a great weight seemed to capture him.

He looked around him, and saw that his head was resting on someone's lap. His eyes looked up, to find the sapphire coloured diamonds looking into his own.

"Krista…? Where am I?" Eren muttered. Krista seemed to stare unbelievably at him, making him feel increasingly uncomfortable as a cold sweat seemed to build for an unknown reason.

"Eren… you're… already dead –

A Week after Eren and the rest of Squad 8 had Returned

Eren looked at the board which displayed all the rankings of how well each group performed against one another. A total of 47 squads that had been formed.

Eren felt dread absolutely engulf him as his eyes fell on the second to last group. The 46th spot. Squad 8.

Early Fall of the Year 850 – Underground Reiss Chapel

He didn't know what he was seeing, but it was surely some beautiful noble-lady brushing her hair smooth until she became startled noticing something in the mirror. He felt like he was looking back at her in that mirror, yet he was looking into himself at the same time.

The contradiction suggested that he was not looking at something that should exist. He felt like his mind was shuddering, as he remembered he had seen this woman in his mind once before, just after his titan experiments yielded no response.

And then the image was gone, and all that was left was a dark mirror.
Eren felt lifeless. Like his whole soul have been stolen away into the afterlife or as if it hadn't been released from the dream world.

It felt like his eyelids had be sealed shut, made to weigh so heavily down that it might seem that the weight of the world was being pressed down on top of them.

Yet slowly, Eren strained his eyes open to be met with glaring light from everywhere. By reflex, he would instantly want to clench them back shut immediately. However his reflex was overwhelmed by the way he was drawn to the ethereal sight around him.

The light of sun and star and moon held a much more different feeling than these pillars of light, like shining lamps of sparkling hues.

A crystal like structure that held a blueish colour, like the darkening evening sky that had been lit up by lights infinitely more powerful than the stars.

It felt like it was seizing him. Pulling his soul apart in between his wake and the dream he had just had.

But he pulled himself awake, focusing on the softer looking shape directly below him, much more welcoming than the piercing light around it.

Historia.

He identified her immediately, standing on the ground below him. Even before the light blinding him resided, he could have sworn he instinctively knew it was her.

"Eren?! Are you awake!?!" she called up to him. Eren wanted to murmur in response, but tasted metal in his mouth denying his response. "Just hold on a little longer! Everything's okay."

Historia tried her best reassure him. Despite looking at the state he was entrapped in, she did her best to reassure him. She didn't know why Eren had been put into such a state, however she had to believe her father was telling the truth. It was just to ensure he didn't accidentally turn into a titan, right?

Her father was only acting cautiously. Once the situation was explained, Eren would be freed. Her father said as much. She had to believe him. She wanted to believe him. In the possibility of living with a father who cared for her.

A possibility which she had discarded long ago. A possibility which she wanted to take form from her childhood desire. She had to believe him. She had to.

But –

'Historia! You're safe,' Eren thought, as he struggled against his gag, letting the fact sink in. He was relieved of his first concern at least.

"Eren… listen," Historia continued, "My father… has always been, and will always be… an ally to what's left of humanity inside these walls. We misunderstood him."

'What?' His confusion caused his thoughts to restart in alarm. Eren's cold sweat did not dissipate even slightly, as he began examining the room in detail, trying to even gain a hint of his current whereabouts.

"Yes, he interfered with the Survey Corps… and he had minister Nick and the Reeves men killed,"
she argued forth, repeating the confessions her father had made "But he didn't have any other choice."

Eren looked at the two men, standing out in the illuminated land who were chatting quickly, bringing their conversation to a close. Historia’s father and the tall man who was now wearing oddly shaped gear. He had changed his clothing completely, but it was undeniably the man who had taken him down a stairway. Then… Eren couldn't remember what came after.

"It was… what he had to do for humanity's sake." Historia concluded her explanation just as the two men finished their conversation. The tall man seemed to turn his head away dissatisfied as Rod began walking towards him.

"Historia, let me explain the rest." The man in question, their so-called target wandered over as he took Historia's arm.

'Now it's coming back…' Eren thought remembering what had happened just before he had been taken somewhere downstairs a bit. While embracing Historia, Eren recalled the words spoken of 'Forgive me for everything. It was what I had to do in order to protect you. I never stopped thinking of you all this time. I dreamed of the day I could hold you like this.'

Eren had seen the tear that made a little river down the side of Historia's cheek. He had taken her story to heart. He knew what it must have meant for her to hear such words. And how he considered what his own reunion with his own father might one day be like.

'No, that doesn't matter. Right now… How much time… has passed since then.' Eren's thoughts regained their bearings as he found himself able to withstand the shimmering lights now. 'The captain, Armin, what's happened to the Survey Corps now?'

Eren looked back down at Rod below him, who patted the head of his daughter. A gesture made to express kindness, but from his eyes alone, Eren could not bring himself to trust him one bit. 'Historia… what has that man told you? … And just how many times… have I been kidnapped now?'

He craned his head to his right, following his arm to where they were being held up at. A clanking sound was emitted as Eren looked up at alarm, concerned to the situation at hand.

Eren looked up at them, at the bandages that sealed his hand and finger movements, and to the clasps which encircled his wrists. Connection him to chains.

For some reason, his heart began racing uncontrollably, screaming out in panic as it begged him to get away.

These chains felt for a minute as if they were shackling him to another world. There weren't just the two to his arm. There were an infinite number of them, encircling his neck, feet, internal organs brain, heart and entire being.

Eren was enchained and weighed down by an absolute mass of chains, all of them with the weight of an angel's feathers.

They were covering his vision, blinding him from anything but chains and the dark world.

No, Eren was made of chains. Or rather, he was "chains" itself.

A world where the normal logic of reality could not be applied.
They couldn’t even really be called "chains", nor could it really be called a "world" which he was in.

It was a completely different state of being –

– And then with a flicker of light, that world disappeared and was replaced with the majestic gemstones that made up the world which the chains were connected to.

The memory forgotten once more.

Their almost divine sparkling was inferior to the **chains** and the **world** he had seen disappear with a flash. But the unnatural land was no less concerning.

’… This wall… what is it? It's faintly glowing… I can't even tell if it's day or night.' Eren thought, already having forgotten the infinite chains he had seen and instead struggling against the two which held up each of his arms.

He looked at the immaculate place that seemed alien from the world he lived in. The feeling which spread throughout every fiber of his body could not be called anything but incomprehension.

’No… That's not it… I... I've… been here before…’ His thoughts changed, and a contradiction began sparkling in his mind, between the unforgettable place yet the familiarity he felt to it.

"What is wrong?" Rod caught Eren's attention, having failed to notice how the man had began walking up one of the staircases while Eren had been distracted. "This is your first time here."

"…?!" Surprised with how his thoughts had been read so easily, Eren turned to face the man who was approaching his back with Historia's own hand grasped oddly in his.

"But… it wouldn't be odd if you remembered it." Both Eren and Historia turned to Rod as he said this, creating much confusion to both of them.

’…?! What's that supposed to mean?’ Eren thought, heart beginning to pound from the man's proximity and his desire to be answered.

’…?!" Eren became alarmed when Rod lifted his hand unnaturally with fingers spread wide open and his eyes filled with contempt aimed at him.

"F… father, are you going to explain to Eren?" Historia worriedly prompted him, sensing Eren's discomfort and herself wishing to answer what her father had just meant. He hadn't told her anything about this before. Why?

"Yes… I plan to." Rod assured, turning to his daughter. "But there's something I'd like to try… we only need to touch him. I suppose you could call it an explanation. He has the memory of what happened here somewhere inside of him."

To Historia and Eren's equal confusion, the man only offered more cryptic words, though she began to imitate her father's gesture herself. Whatever was going on, she wanted to ease Eren's worries. It was the least she could do.

"Doing this might make him remember… a slight trigger may be all that's needed in this place." Rod stated, drawing his spread out hand closer to Eren, with Historia following the same motion at the same time as him. "That, or – "

Her hand came down only a fraction of a second sooner than her father. She pressed her own right
hand on the left side of Eren's back, while her father placed his own left hand on Eren's right side.

And then –

**The world was torn apart once again.**

---

Rod himself was unfazed. He knew what he was about to see. But to Eren and Historia, the instant her hand came down, brushing on the skin formed over his spine, their own eyes felt like they witnessed the world being destroyed.

As if an invincible amount of power had connected them in that spot. A spot marked by a single coordinate which paid no heed to time nor space.

A reality, an absolute truth. Together, they fell into their respective and intertwining worlds –

Eren's eye felt like it was made from lightning that crashed down to the earth whenever his titan form was created. It was thundering through the entire world as he saw seen things he had never seen before.

A chapel. The night was dense yet the torchlight was streaming out from the expensive glass windows. He felt like he was flying through the land, the doors flying open as he witnessed the empty interior to his panic.

The alter cleared, and the seats unoccupied with only two candelabra with four branches, a candle on each burning fiercely.

Already looking around, he was pulling open a hidden trap door, revealing a staircase similar in shape to the one he had gone down. He –

A spiraling staircase just like the one he had gone down as well. – who was he?

Through the caverns of light expelling crystal pillars, he was running in a windless land, as fast as the wind would if it existed. There, in the distance, several figures praying in a circle.

'*This… What is this…'*

They turned to face him at the sound of his footsteps in shock.

'*These things never happened to me…'*

The woman at the front, the same woman as the one he saw in the mirror. He knew it the instant he saw her eyes, no longer concealing their true form.

'*NO!*'

His mind screamed as it came to look at the face of a desperate titan with colourless hair as his own hand grasped its wrist firmly, intending to pull it off and rip it apart.

'*Whose memories are these?!!*

These aren't things he had seen, these aren't things he had done, they couldn't be. But there was no escape into his thoughts away from these sights.

The crushed body of a mother trying to protect her child, while lifting up the body of another,
intending to squeeze the life out of him as the boy begged for his fleeing father's help.

He was already away from it, running away from the burning chapel as it collapsed.

Then another man. He was in another location completely, but he was running forward to a man who held the symbol of the Survey Corps who himself was struggling aimlessly amongst the crowd surging at him, and refusing him to break free.

One place changed completely again. He was in a forest, clearly it was autumn even in the night, the fallen trees littering the ground assured the fact that it was fall. But more importantly –

'… This key!'

There was no way he could ever mistake it. Except he was looking at a child's hand holding it as he spoke things incomprehensible to himself.

Entrusting the child with something he couldn't accomplish, as his own memories were reminded by the rotting carcass of a different girl, no more than 8 years old, even after clearly being mutilated beyond recognition.

'WHAT IS THIS…?!'

The images kept appearing and disappearing at the speed of light, as he found himself looking at his own self from 5 years ago. He knew instantly what this was now as he held the syringe in one hand while he pulled the wailing child in fear towards him.

'COULD IT BE…'

The child collapsed in pain after being injected with the liquid, grasping at the dying trees as his body felt cursed and blown open from the inside as a tremendous source of light erupted.

He took on the form of what he hated above all else at that moment. The titan held a terrifying similarity in facial features to him. His own titan form grabbed himself, as he saw the face of his father reflected in its eyes as it bit down.

The titan skeleton was already burning, evaporating quickly into nothingness to his side. Eren picked up the bent spectacles with one of his trembling hand and held the fallen shoe in the other. The leaves which he sat on, unable to move his legs was drenched in the blood of his father.

The bitten off arm lay in front of him, plastering the leaves in the crimson colour of the insides, as steam erupted from the burning marks that were etched into his spine and below his tear streaming eyes, releasing fresh gusts of water vapour.

'F… Fa… ther?'

The truth was obvious now. He felt like he somehow knew it deep inside all along, but the leftover corpse could not be questioned. The top was entirely bitten off, innards leaking the pulled out intestines and spilled stomach.

Both his parents had fallen to titans. He had failed to save his mother from one, and he had been the one to kill his own father as well. There were so many things he wanted to say to them both.

He screamed. His mind, body and soul screamed out at the world. His cries could not even be cared, for the world was uncaring of his struggles.
"So? Now do you remember… your father's sin?"

Of course he had. But –

At this moment. Eren Jaeger had been destroyed for the first time.

The memories did not nearly stop drowning him at that point with truth, prophecy and fate…

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 – In the Carriage After the Military Seize Control**

"The best choice for humanity… would have been to leave everything to the old monarchy," Erwin began talking. There was only one person beside him in the carriage, the commander-in-chief Darius Zackly – the new ruler of humanity behind the walls. "No matter how shallow and debased they might have been, they've held off the titans and kept humanity alive up till now."

The carriage made a gentle turn leftwards, jumping slightly from dropping into a hole in the uneven road.

"Even if they were content to watch half of the surviving humans die, even that would have been better than allowing all of humanity to go extinct." Erwin continued to the old man next to him who in response turned to examine him with an unreadable expression, "perhaps you should have entrusted them with all of it, "Eren's titan power… the retaking of Wall Maria… even Eren's life."

"These past few days, my thoughts have not been with my friends… when I think of all humanity," the commander slunk back down into his thoughts. He remembered what the leader of the entire wall religion had called him. *'It's not a stretch to say that you are a threat of humanity.'*

"Perhaps I should have let my comrades die, as I always have." Yet more sacrifices he would have had to make as always. However, in Erwin's mind, it would have been the last ones he had to make. "Eren, Levi, Hanji… I could have abandoned them… along with my life and duty… and entrusted everything to the crown. If humanity… really is more precious than any one human's life..."

The silence held the air for a while on the inside, while the carriage continued its route outside.

Clause 6 of the Charter of Humanity. The recently overthrown aristocracy had been found guilty of it, and so Pixis had sided with their removal. They had also committed treason by using the puppet king Fritz.

However, to Erwin, and to the commander-in-chief, they found that their guilt was no less. They had both decided to prioritize themselves over the rest of humanity.

For a wish. For a dream. –

"You didn't want to die. You're like me. You put yourself over the fate of humanity."

The elder man spoke, having spent many years in the military service, taking a long time to climb the ladder and reach the spot which he was in now.

The choice between the individual and the all the individuals around the one individual. Those who made a choice of either one or the other.
What's your reason? It's your turn to answer now."

The elder man finished. A reason as to why you would make one choice or the other.

"... I suppose... it was hubris..." Erwin suggested the thought, being met with a gaze of scrutiny in return. It was not a question of pride, though perhaps self-confidence played a factor, the proper answer however –

"I have a dream. It's one I've had since I was a child."

---

Bits of ups and downs in this chapter, in how I wanted to write something like 'this' since I think it would be pretty entertaining and more 'fun', however instead of cutesy sweetness, I did... this! And finally, next chapter, I'll be able to delve more into Ymir's part at last since Historia thinks back to her for the first time since she left in the cave.

Also... season 3 so called split cour (even though it basically a season 4 which really messes with my naming process along with chapter content a little... oh well, we'll jump off that bridge when we come to it ) since things can change as a result now, but whatever I'll bring that back up at a later chapter, but realised this chapter that even though the skipped manga content outweighs the extra little anime content, there as still a couple nice things like the charter of humanity which was introduced but yeah, follows the manga at the end of the day, but has stuff like this added in as well.

BUT AHHHH! YES MY ORPHANAGE SCENE WHEN THE MUSIC CAME ROLLING IN! Thank god for that, even if they missed two sweet little additions, one actually pretty important to Eren's character in general, and one important for maximum shipper vibes, but alas, t'was most reminiscing.

Ending Scene: WARNING MANGA SPOILERS - CONTAINS SPOILERS FOR SEASON 4 (OR WHAT WILL BE SEASON 4 AT LEAST)

The wounded soldier disguised in the hospital had just seen him.

He had been staring into the mirror, which had been gifted to him by his half-brother. Immaculately clean, crystal clear. His tired eye could easily be seen in it.

The wounded soldier was sitting on his usual bench again, awaiting the certain visit from a young boy.

The mirror had reflected his face back as it should have been. Bandages covering on eye, long hair collecting down and concealing much of his face.

There wasn't much to really see from his own reflection, so he had moved it around a bit, understanding the angles and the images which he would see from them.

He had been aiming it so that he could have a view of the open gate past his left shoulder.

And then – he had seen him.

The bearer of the curse of Ymir which he had intended to meet soon. This was too soon. They couldn't meet here.
He had dropped the mirror in panic, most unbecoming of him, and let it fall to the ground, shattering to a million pieces instantly.

It had been a fragile thing.

The wounded soldier didn't move. He kept his eye carefully turned towards looking at the gate, expecting his bad luck to run its course and for the bearer of the Armour to be standing next to him.

The bearer of the Armour wasn't there.

The wounded soldier soon realised that the man had simply passed the gate, not at all putting a step inside the courtyard.

He breathed out. Not in relief but in annoyance.

He had broken the mirror lying beneath him after all.

He liked that mirror.

The wounded soldier reached down, struggling to lean his body down far enough, on account of his missing leg.

He managed to peel a large piece of glass from the ground and place it into his open left palm. He was thankful that the stone at least made it easier for him to pick each piece up.

"Ah, Mr Kruger, are you alright?"

A young boy spoke, having suddenly appeared next to him while he had been distracted.

"Yes… It's nothing to worry about, Falco… just a little accident… I can clean it up..."

The wounded soldier replied and began picking up the hundreds of shards again.

The warrior cadet didn't heed the older soldier's last words and immediately dropped off his bag on the bench, bent down and began helping to pick the tiny fragments himself.

The wounded soldier thanked him. He had a lot to thank the young boy for.

All the shards, they reflected various gleams of lights, various images of the world.

It was practically impossible for the two of them to pick every single tiny cracked up peace of it up, yet they endeavoured to do so.

The evening had been spent just like that easily.

Yet they were both content to just spend it, with a bit of chat in between, picking up the fragments of a now lost world.

The world shown in that mirror would be by an absolutely miniscule amount, different from any other mirror.

The world which it showed could never be seen again.

It had been lost in a single moment in panic.
The wounded soldier wondered, hoped.

That he could one day have a mirror to see the delicate, soft lips of his lover in another part of the world.

Even if he couldn't speak to her that way, he would be content seeing the sweet and delicate form of his beloved.

It would remind him of all the times he had stolen contact from them for himself.

He also wished that she could look into her own fragment of a mirror, and see a part of him. Ideally, if she could see his remaining eye.

She could then tell everything she needed to know from his eye alone.

But no such mirror existed to connect them.

All he had, was the shattered remains of the world on his side.
And now… my precious brethren, my treacherous enemies… now… the real story begins…

… Okay, not really. Still, I feel as if I did this chapter to the standard I had aimed it at more or less, but that'll be for y'all to decide as always, but yeah double length chapter basically! Oh and PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE absolutely tell me if anyone is having trouble reading something this long in a chapter, or in general feel it would be easier to read as 2 SEPARATE CHAPTERS, and I'll split it! Didn't know whether to do so, or to not, but yeah, please tell me!

The anime fight between Kenny/Levi and the Levi Squad along with Hanji and Moblit was generally arguably better, minus some movements made which missed animating the wire attachments but those are all minor, though the whole net thing might have been a good addition though it felt easily overcome when the hole opened up for them, but here like with a few other aspects, I've left them open-ended so you can choose which you see as better fulfilling the gap since they have a fight one way or another and arrive just after Rod Reiss becomes a titan.

Also, originally, I was going to rewrite Frieda as per her first appearance, but decided to follow the more manga sequence at this point with some newer content. And just so you know… I'm gonna go with the anime detail of 'Krista' as you-know-who's name in the story… for now at least, I feel it could work out… I think, even though it spoils my original plan lol.

Discord invite: https://discord.gg/csQFFUC

"speech"

'thoughts' - Italics

Chapter 7 - Die Gegner der Menschheit

Early Fall of the Year 850

Eren was dead.

The Original Eren had just died.

Either that, or the world itself around him had just shattered. It would be easier to assume the former.

Frankly it didn't matter in either case.
All that mattered, was that he had seen truths he shouldn't have, and have failed to grasp realizations他 had always understood.

He felt it all, yet he couldn't remember half of it.

However, an underlining feeling of having fallen into forbidden knowledge flooded through him.

The world was crackling, maybe in laughter at him.

Is that the angel who flew down from the twilight sky? Is that the devil who crawled out of the crevice?

He saw her. He saw Historia for certain in the images without form and sense. He saw her so many times, that he felt like he ceased to forget what she looked like even more.

He felt like she was one, and he the other. But already he could not tell which was which.

Like the world was made of dust, connected by flashes of lightning, all contracting and exploding, in shapes and shards. Fragments and forms.

Screams and silence instantly interchanged. Deep howling from the depths, wretched wailing from the far away land and furious lacerations of savage and bloodthirsty beings.

Tears... Anger... Compassion... Cruelty…

In unending streams of shock waves.

Peace... Chaos... Faith... Betrayal…

The feelings of all sorts were indistinguishable simply by how similar it looked when they had all been named by humans.

Alcohol… Women…. or even God…

It was a fact he had learnt no more than a week ago. The Titans were once human. Each of them, surely won't have been dissimilar to all the other sorts he'd seen throughout his life.

Family… the King… Dreams… Children… Power…

The various dreams, beliefs and wishes of the world.

That was something which he was not meant to see.

Something which he didn't have a right to see.

No, even before that, he felt that this was wrong. He was supposed to see his father's memories from this place to his end. Nothing more.

Yet he had seen more. He had seen things that weren't meant to have been seen yet.

Or so… he felt like someone had just told him. Who? Why? It was impossible for Eren to tell.

To even have a glance at these fragments of Akashic records felt like a violation of natural world law.

A sin that was placed at the zenith of all others.
But one that he himself had not chosen to undergo intentionally.

"So? Now do you remember… your father's sin?" Rod spoke, awakening him to the surrounding caverns once more, but not bringing him any bit back into his proper self.

After all, there was no longer a former self which he could return to after seeing 'it'.

A glimpse at the ending of it all.

---

Mid Fall of the Year 843 – Reiss farmlands in Wall Rose

The little girl had been crying again.

Stumbling across the field towards the edge of the farm, locked around by a fence, she collapsed at her usual hidden spot and wiped her tears away.

She was resting up against the fence itself, the borderline of her cage. Just outside of it, there was a single tree which was growing, from which blood crimson apples were dangling.

The tree under which she would see her mother always reading, though she was not present there today. She had left on the carriage earlier than usual just after noon had passed.

Historia had never stepped out beyond that fence, she was too scared to. But surely, perhaps today or tomorrow, or sometime soon, she could risk going and sitting in the shade under that tree. No, not today.

Her trembling hands made their way and rubbed the spot on her knee where she had fallen over after taking a hit to the head.

The boys had come again on that day. From down the road which the farm was connected to, they had come up the street, rocks in hand after preparing them beforehand.

They knew that she worked the farm all day, so it didn't take much memory to always remember when she would be raking up the hay as per usual.

It was that time of the year again after all, when the fruits would ripen, ready for plucking, and the harvest was progressing at a fast rate.

She had to collect all the hay which had been dragged over across the fields, and form the loose hay stacks with them.

The farm was still fairly large, however space was still limited for interior storage. Some of the hay would be brought inside, and fed to the horses and other farm animals during the winter when the snow would deny them of their usual feed of grass.

That had been done a few months ago already, and now all that remained was the loose hay they would pile, in case of emergencies or as an option to trade with the other farmers of the land who may have failed to collect their needed amount in the blistering heat of summer.

Hay had to be kept away from the weather, fresh and untouched by the dampness of the rain. However, realistically, that sort of thing was simply not possible.

Here in the more northern region within the territory of Wall Rose, rain and snow were all but certain at this time. There had been a small bout of hail a few days ago, not enough to ruin the
dropped out hay completely, but enough to cast the warning of the approaching force of cold.

It was quite clear that if left outside, unprotected for any longer, that the entirety of the remaining loose hay would be ruined. The job was usually done by her grandmother, however from this year onward, Historia had been given the additional job, yet had forgotten about it all too quickly.

Until her grandmother, 'sternly' reminded her. Her grandparents didn't talk to her often. They didn't talk to her at all if they could avoid it.

And so, Historia was sent to create the hay piles from all that remained. Her short height in the end, meant that she could finish the piles completely, and so her grandmother would come out in the evenings and finish them after Historia managed all that she could do.

The shape of the stacks was designed for the rainwater to run down the sides, and only dampen the surface of the hay.

That way, the hay on the interior would survive.

Sacrificing the crop on the outside, in order to save the greater number on the inside.

The few for the many.

As a result, the majority would be satisfactory to meet the needs of trading with their neighboring farm owners.

It was a tough job, but Historia had endeavored and managed as much as she could. Her grandparents did not complain any further. At the very least, she hoped they wouldn't come after her.

Instead – the three boys had chosen this day to continue their torment on her. She had smacked down into the hay stack which she had spent the whole morning and much of the afternoon setting up, causing it to get crushed and split into two.

It was exhausting to constantly be on the move like that, day after day, without a single rest break being permitted.

Historia would always try to remember to make sure she didn't forget to keep an eye on the road, every late afternoon.

They had come the day before, and so she had forgotten to be mindful today. The little girl had gripped the back of her head, clenching her jaw as she tried to drive the pain out unsuccessfully.

She had blanked out of consciousness for a short while, and the boys had been calling out to her, telling her to come closer to them.

More rocks hit her, as she had tried to get away by crawling, yet still ending up getting hit on the knee even more strongly on the knee, causing her to fall flat again.

That time hadn't been a rock, it was a brick. They must have decided to carry it from somewhere downtown for the sole purpose of throwing it at her. The boys had jeered, saying how they had missed her head.

To her luck on that day, her grandmother had appeared since it was late in the afternoon, causing the boys to run off and hide their faces in fright.
Her grandmother's stern expression glanced at hers, before scoffing as if she had looked at something unbecoming before picking up the dropped pitchfork and proceeding to do the work herself.

Historia had taken this as a sign to leave immediately, knowing she wasn't going to get any sympathy nor help here.

Her head spun and it felt like it was bleeding slightly. She was already starting to get used to dealing with the strikes she would get, but never getting adjusted to the pain.

Dampening a cloth from the old bucket or dirtied water and compressing it gently, as it throbbed at the back of the 7 year old's head.

It stung but she muffled her cries with biting her lip. She repeated it, and then wrapped a piece of her already torn blanket around her head.

She slept inside the barn, originally having nothing but straw to use and wrap herself out in the cold. When she had been younger, she had found a piece of thrown out curtain in the garbage, and gone to ask her grandparents if she could use it.

They had glanced at the then 4 year old child and waved her off wordlessly, gesturing for her to do what she wanted.

She had kept and slept under the same improvised blanket ever since. She had grown again this year, and would need something better to protect her from the cold this oncoming winter.

It was still early evening, and the sun would still linger for a couple of hours, so she took one of her books and sneaked over to her usual reading spot.

Why wasn't it that the book might tell her what characters would do in cases like this. In her books, no characters would ever face being struck by stones.

Why? The question could clearly not be answered.

There was nothing she could do about that. Still, this book wasn't so bad, even if it or none of the others gave her an answer to her problems. They were all the same broadly speaking.

Collections of tales about knights and princesses, soldiers and maidens. An evil and a good, over which the latter would always triumph.

Apart from… a hero who would save her… how long would she have to wait until someone like that would come?

There was no way to know. For the time being… she continued reading the next chapter, the pain becoming slightly more bearable as her focus shifted to something more calming.

The breeze was gentle that day. Lost in a fictional world, she would continue reading until it got too dark.

Historia suddenly looked up from her book, as the wind changed ever so slightly, making her notice the steady steps on the grass that had been recently grazed upon behind the to the right.

A beautiful woman with long dark hair and eyes matching her own, hopped down from the fence as she caught the girl's sight happily.
“Hey! Historia, how have... you been...” The woman spoke, eyes at first dancing in delight at looking at the girl, before quickly becoming solemn with seriousness.

Historia was certain that she’d never seen such a beautiful woman before, and she gazed in wonder, her pain all forgotten instantly.

The demeanor of the young woman instantly changed however as she dropped to the grass and stomped over, frightening the young blonde girl.

"Umm, h-hello, c-can I help y– " the young girl managed to stutter, overwhelmed.

"Shh," the dark haired woman cooed, "it's alright, I won't hurt you, just let me..."

For some reason, Historia instantly felt at ease, as the woman crouched onto her knees and leaned forward towards her.

Her gentle arms came over to the back of her head, touching her gently to avoid triggering any pain as their foreheads swiftly made contact.

A brief flash, and Historia saw her older half sister Frieda look at her deeply concerned. Historia blinked, surprised as ever at how Frieda would always seemingly appear out of nowhere

"Ah, big sis!" The young blonde girl was instantly filled with glee and happiness at her older sister's arrival.

"Historia... who hurt you?" Frieda took the book from her sister and laid it to the side carefully as she examined the rough bit of clothing that had been improperly tied around the girl.

"It was... an accident I had..." Historia claimed. She didn't know why she was lying but if she had to guess it was because of not wanting to trouble her big sis.

This was a time where she could be away from the toils of the farm and the hardships of being treated as she was. Here she wanted to enjoy peace and tranquility with her half sibling for as long as possible.

"Historia... you shouldn't tell lies..." Frieda said knowingly as she put her hand on the poor knot the young girl had tied on her head bandage.

"I-I'm not..." the younger girl faltered.

"Your ears are red, which means you have something to hide... Historia," Frieda gently brushed Historia’s ear gently to emphasize the gesture as she pulled the cloth away and carefully lifted the back of the girl's hair and looked over.

"Shh, it's okay now Historia," Frieda whispered into her ear. The younger girl blinked back, not knowing what else to do.

Her eyes were still sore and slightly puffed up after rubbing them for a while earlier. But... for some reason, the pain throughout her body disappeared. She felt... as if she was being healed.

Her head was patted softly, and turned to face a sad smile from the older woman. "Historia... you know you can tell me anything..."

Historia blinked again, in uncertainty. She thought over it 'Maybe... I should say... then maybe... no, I'll not trouble big sis anymore that I already am... she's already done... so much for me... ’
"Thank you big sis, but you don’t need to be worried about anything," Historia thought up of an excuse, "I just… injured myself when I was working..."

Frieda was clearly not convinced, and wished to pursue the matter further.

"A-ah, look though," the younger girl sought a distraction, "I can read this story now. T-the one about 'Rotkäppchen'!"

"Oh, is that so?" The black haired woman asked, deciding to play along with her younger half sister for now. "What's that one about?"

"Yep! It's about the little girl, who wore a red riding hood, who was travelling to her sickly grandmother's cottage in the woods in order to bring her food and drink!" Historia recited proudly from memory, "her mother had warned her to stay directly on the path, but along the way, she met a big bad wolf!"

"Grr!" Frieda imitated the animal and bared her teeth. The younger girl giggled happily and picked up the book for cover.

"The big bad wolf asks little red riding hood where she is going, and she tells the wolf about her sick grandmother. The wolf then suggests that little red riding hood should go and pick some flowers, especially the blue ones that grew in the field just along the road, which were said to have many properties!"

"Oh no! She didn't heed her mother's warning," Frieda asked, knowing completely how the story went. "What did the big bad wolf do after that?"

"The big bad wolf then left and went to the home of the girl's grandmother, and then he swallowed her whole!" Historia waved her hand theatrically.

"Eek! Oh no, what happens then?" Both girls sat down next to each other, against the fence together.

"Then, the big bad wolf disguises himself as the grandmother and waits in bed for little red riding hood! When she arrived, she noticed that her grandmother looked really strange," Historia continued reciting the lines the characters had said.

"She said to the wolf in disguise 'What a deep voice you have!' and the wolf responds 'The better to greet you with!'."

– 'If only the wolf was more careful, and made its voice sweeter, it could have fooled the girl...'

Historia had thought earlier.

"She then says 'What big eyes you have!', and this time the wolf replies 'The better to see you with!'".

– 'If only the wolf was more careful, and disguised its eyes better, it could have fooled the girl...'

"After that she notices 'And what big hands you have!', to which the wolf says 'The better to hug you with!'".

– 'If only the wolf was more careful, and concealed its true self underneath the blanket, it could have fooled the girl...'

"And finally, little red riding hood says 'What a big mouth you have...'. This time the wolf jumps
out of bed and growls ‘All the better to eat you with!’.”

– ‘If only the wolf had been more patient and tried to get the timing right, it could have succeeded with concealing its identity until it was too late...’

“Rawr!” Both of the sisters simultaneously did their best fearsome pose and jumped at each other, laughing away as they tumbled gently a little, Historia unable to make Frieda budge a single bit.

"Well, how does the story end?" the older girl spoke once more after they had calmed down.

"Then, all of a sudden, a hunter appears to the rescue, and kills the big bad wolf before it can eat little red riding hood! After that, the hunter and the little red riding hood lived happily ever after!" Historia clapped her hands together, showing that she finished.

"Haha, well done Historia!" Frieda ruffled the younger's hair affectionately, "so... did you like that story?"

"Mhm,"Historia nodded, "but..."

"But...?" The elder inquired.

"It felt... incomplete..." she shrugged her shoulders, "we never even got to learn anything about the hunter's name, only that he was a hunter. Or... what sort of connection he had with the wolf, and how he knew how to find it..."

"Ah, I see..." Frieda nodded acknowledging the issue, "yes, the story doesn't quite finish everything, does it now?"

"A-and then the wolf, I'd like to know more about it as well!" Historia suddenly got excited, "why was it even able to speak?! And why did it feel like talking to Little Red Riding Hood and suggesting her to bring some unusual flowers? Was there something special about the flowers and what the wolf would do with them?"

"Ah, His–" her older sister tried to interject, quite confused as to why the wolf would be the most interest to her.

"And, and why did it choose to talk to her to begin with? If the wolf wanted to eat her, it could have done it then and gone to eat her grandmother as well if it wanted to! Maybe the wolf was actually really nice, but was hungry anyway, what if – " Historia was cut off, as she was brought into a hug.

Or rather, the hug had made her forget what she was talking about. Quite literally, her interest in the big bad wolf in the story vanished.

"Now, now Historia," Frieda carefully said, "it's really nice that you enjoyed a book like that so much."

"... Huh?" The young Historia was startled at the eyes she was looking at. These eyes, weren't Frieda's. They felt like they had seized her sister from her. The eyes of a powerful being, stronger than any naive little girl, wold or hunter.

The eyes of a monster who would possess people against their will. And then they were gone, and she had forgotten about them as well.

"Well... since you're getting along reading the little stories so well, how about I lend you this book." Frieda pulled out a fairly hefty book by comparison from her satchel, "it's still probably too
early to start reading this, but you can still keep hold of it until you're ready."

"Thank you, so much!" Historia took the gift gratuitously, and looked at the title.

"His... toria?" she gasped, surprised at the name of the book being akin to her own.

Frieda laughed and shook her head, "not quite. Try reading it again carefully."

"His... tor... ie?" she managed to read out the odd font on the cover as her older sibling clapped her hands together.

"That's right, I think... this book... might help you..."

The vague words were left hanging cryptically as the sun had almost set. A head tap. Then another flash of lightening, and the blonde girl was once more no longer familiar with the older black haired lady.

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 – Underground Reiss Chapel**

"... What is it, Historia?" Rod asked. Historia had stumbled back a few steps from Eren, clutching the side of her head from a thundering pain which brought so many precious memories back.

"... How..." she muttered, tearing up from the happiness, relief, sadness and grief. "How was it I... had forgotten all of this time?"

Historia remembered the first time she had seen the young woman as she wondered towards her and found her sitting against the fence reading a book, which she then gave to her 5 year old self. Her first book. Her first gift.

That young lady would hold her up and spin her around in the air, as they laughed joyfully and she was told that one she would get tall enough.

She call her over and pulled her up onto one of the steeds that would graze in the land. She taught her how to remain balanced, grip the reigns and ride with the wind streaming all around her.

"**I wasn't alone...**" The feeling of being held closely at another's chest, as they smiled down upon you. "**I had... her.**"

Historia had been wrong.

She had not been empty from the day she was born. There had been someone there even for her...

"She... taught me how to read and write. She was so kind to me..." Her voice sounded in the echoing caverns, deep with a mess of feelings, "how could I have forgotten her...?"

"... You knew..." Rod asked surprised, "... Frieda?"

"...?" Historia pronounced the name that felt so familiar to her, "Frieda?"

"A young girl with long, black hair?" Her father elaborated, beginning to connect the dots of what his eldest daughter must have been doing in her spare time. "That was Frieda Reiss. She was your half sister."

Historia looked to her father, the tears of the past clinging to the bottom of her eyelids.
"I suppose she was worried about you and checked in on you from time to time." Rod explained, turning to face Eren, "she must have erased your memories of her… so as to protect you."

"What?" Historia became perplexed at the concept, "erase my memories?"

"Yes," he looked down upon the chained and frozen vessel of the 'Founding Titan'. "But..."

"… Laying your hand on him in this place… seems to have brought those memories back."

Eren's form was paralyzed yet somewhat quiescent at the same time. Historia took in the unnaturality to his lack of motion.

"…?" Her mind came to a conclusion, "..."

'Then did Eren remember something, too…?' she thought, looking at his abnormal still form. She began to feel worried for him the instant she saw him like that.

It was simply… unnatural.

"Um… Father…?" Historia clutched her hand to her heart as she spoke, finding some semblance of ease from the tingling sensation in it after touching Eren, "what's… going to happen to Eren, and um… where is Frieda now?"

Rod stiffened his expression, awaiting for Historia to finish before pondering the best way to answer her.

"I'd like to meet her and thank her," she continued honestly, "If it wasn't for her, then I… I need to thank her for what she did back then."

The name penetrated deeply through Eren as he already felt the connection to the black haired woman he had seen several times now.

"… Frieda is no longer of this world..." Historia's father stated simply.

"What…?" She managed in disbelief. She had just found out about Frieda… her older sister… and now...

"I once had five children… but five years ago, my wife, and all our children, including Frieda..." Rod extended his arms and brought Historia closely into an embrace as he began recounting the events that took place, "… were killed in this place… by Grisha Jaeger, his father."

To Eren, the truth was undeniable already… yet Rod repeating the tale only made him feel a darker more complicated opinion of the man he thought he knew as his father…

And… the fact that Historia was about to be told… made him feel an unexplainable wave of fear as being looked at the contempt filled eyes which he had already seen… somewhere…

He tried to locate the source of the memories, yet was caught in replaying the memories of his father, now engraved into his mind forever...

His father had appeared before the family, stabbing a knife into his hand, he assumed the form of the beings that killed his mother.

"Grisha possessed Titan power. I didn't know who he was..." "… but I do know… he came here to steal away the power of the Reiss family."
Just like Reiner… Bertholdt… Annie… he held the same power as them… he held it… and he wasn't there when his mother needed him… when he and Mikasa needed him...

"And what Grisha sought… was the Titan power that resided inside Frieda."

Frieda instead took to biting her hand to transform… just like Eren himself would always do…

"Frieda's Titan was the greatest of all the Titans." "It possessed an invincible power… but… she lacked the experience necessary to exploit its full potential."

Her titan had hair as white and bright as the incandescent lamplight of stars in the distant lands past the sky… inferior only to the dazzling gleam in the eyes he had seen of Historia… in distant and contradictory memories…

It was wrong. He didn't know how he knew, but he just knew. Frieda… Historia… he shouldn't be seeing these things… not here…

He was lost in his memories again until Rod's echoing voice reached him again.

"And so, unable to unleash her true abilities… " he could remember it, how his father crushed the titan of Historia's sister to the ground, and ripped out her spinal column entirely from its body, devouring her entirely after Frieda had been captured with a single crush of his Titan's teeth, "… Frieda was eaten by Grisha… who stole that power away."

The first time… in almost 2000 years… the Founding Titan had been defeated, and stolen by another Titan Shifter…

"Even worse… his eyes then fell upon our family… and he tried to eradicate the Reiss line."

And then...

"He crushed Dirk, who was fourteen, and his brother Abel, who was twelve."

Eren saw it clearly, looking down at the vein pulsing left Titan hand which had been used to crush the two children against the ground.

"He stomped Florian, still only ten, along with her mother, as they held to each other."

The Titan right foot crushing down upon Rod's wife and their youngest child, making contact with one of the cavern pillars.

"Finally, he squeezed the life out of Urklyn, our eldest son."

The Titan right hand had easily crushed down, breaking through the rib cage of the young boy.

"The only one who managed to survive… was me."

Leaving, the Titan had crushed out from under the caverns and erupted from the Reiss chapel that was situated on top, causing half of it to collapse as the his father's Titan form began its journey south-west.

"My poor... sister..." Historia breathed, feeling aghast at coming to learn the truth of what happened. She turned to Eren, still having yet to move and asked, "How could he do… such a terrible thing?"

Eren didn't do anything to reply. He couldn't naturally talk with his mouth being gagged, but he
made no shake or sign that he was refusing what had just been stated.

Historia was still uncertain… but, there was something that made her absolutely sure that what her father had said was the truth…

"Whoa… whoa… whoa. Y'all are still blabbering?" the heavy footsteps of a tall man, now wearing an odd form of gear sounded as the man popped from behind a pillar, unbecomingly quiet.

"Did ya forget what just happened? Like I just told ya, the military's coup d'etat was a huge success! Good for them right?" The top hat wearing man called up to Rod, reminding him of the conversation they were having minutes ago from Historia's perspective, "it's only a matter of time before they find this place. Hurry up and do what needs to be done."

"Yes… that was my plan," Rod verified, and grew accusative "but I believe that I told you that all anti-personnel control squad members had to leave here first, including you. Why are you still here?"

"Awful sorry, King! Did I make ya mad?" Kenny scratched the back of his head and then jumped exaggeratedly, "I'm just here looking for a bathroom! I gotta go number two!"

"Kenny… I trust you." Rod assured, giving a sad look as he dismissed him. "Go."

"Likewise, King," Kenny turned his back on the three of them after tipping his hat and hiding his unsatisfied face.

He had hoped Rod would have understood the urgency and had proceeded with the ritual, yet he had found them still talking much to his discontent.

He wanted to hurry. Kenny needed to hurry. It was, after all, what the last 2 decades had been leading up to...

"I have a dream. It's one I've had since I was a child."

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 – Back on the Wall After Eren had been Recovered**

"Hurry! Help the injured first!" Shouts drowned out the sound of wires being reeled in, and feet thinking onto the top of the wall after the three dozen soldiers were pulling themselves up.

"Is this really everyone…?!" The members of the garrison shouted amongst them, trying to ensure that everyone got the assistance that they needed.

"Where did the military police brigade go?!" called another soldier, peering down at the wall.

"Did we really lose more than half of them?!" Connie slumped down to the ground from exhaustion as he heard the detail being stated from behind him.

"Whoa!" Rico, one of the captains stationed managed to catch Historia who was on the verge of fainting. "This girl's in bad shape, too!"

"Drink," the captain said, offering the water skin to her mouth just as the blonde was about to pass out from exhaustion, "you're okay. The Titans are gone now."

"Unh..." Connie moaned, wiping the sweat of his body, unable to push back the fatigue clinging to
him, "agh..."

"Waagh..." the winds carried the enervation of the entirety of the survivors who had witnessed and fought through the whole battle.

The last of the lifts brought the horses back up. Soldiers began to be treated and sent on their way back to the Trost district along the walls.

Historia could hardly hear anything besides the wails, the whines and the shouts of the soldiers all around her.

Soldiers amazed that they were still alive, clinging to something in desperate need to quell the pain, exhaustion and sorrow clutching at the cold night air.

She took a drink and managed to focus despite the pounding headache rigorously beating in her and denying clear thoughts.

She could hardly concentrate yet felt someone's eyes landing on her exhausted shape. Before she could manage to look up, he had turned away, an aghast atmosphere breaking the cold of the night away from him.

She saw him as she steadied her breathing. She watched him look around at all the people who were still alive, around them, the gravity of the loss seizing him once more.

Jean, Armin and Connie had joined him as they began to converse the details of the mission. She couldn't listen to them right now.

There was only one thing in her mind right now.

Ymir.

Ymir had just left her. She had turned away and gone to aid Reiner and Bertholdt in their fight against the Titans. Was she still with them? Had she survived? Maybe she had broken off in the confusion and is making her way to the wall as well at this very moment?

Right now, she had to... get back to her.

The person who had given her answer on the snowy mountains. Who had made a promise with then, and one which she had to keep from only this morning as Ymir had dove out from the tower of Utgard castle.

The lack of time begin to sink in... just today, they had thought against the wave of Titans there, and then she had found out for the first time that Ymir could transform into a Titan.

Just like Eren did, except Ymir hid it for herself. It may have been selfish, but Historia was certain that she could stand up for her, and say that Ymir wasn't their enemy.

… But if she had to be honest... she didn't know where Ymir stood either...

No, that didn't even cross her mind. Just like Ymir had risked her life to save hers along with Connie, Reiner and Bertholdt, she was more than willing to do the same.

That was all that mattered to her that morning. It didn't matter how much of a mystery Ymir was even to her, and how many secrets she withheld.

Historia felt it. A strong connection by which they could understand each other by. How Ymir had
seen through Krista, and still stood by her.

Why?

"I don't know... maybe because we're alike..." was what Ymir had said... Historia thought back. She didn't know how, but she felt Ymir was telling the truth given how she understood what her intention was as Krista... back then...

She didn't know why, but surely it shouldn't matter. They were similar, and Historia herself had been reborn anew this morning... as per the promise she made to Ymir...

They would live their own lives together, both for themselves... but that was clearly impossible... if Ymir was here...

She needed her... she needed someone to show her where to go next, how to even begin living in a way, which she had never lived before...

Right now, she needed to get back to Ymir. Then she could show her the path Historia should take.

Her attention was then caught elsewhere.

"You did that, right Eren?" Armin had spoken, wishing to verify the self-evident truth. Historia had seen him in that moment as well as she fought on alongside Ymir.

In that one moment, everything changed. The Titans had stopped attacking them. Everyone's faces naturally turned to the direction the horde had taken off to.

Historia, like everyone else, had been mesmerized and let out her breath in awe at the scene of enemies which could not be routed, suddenly running at the distance as they gathered around to feast upon something.

The tide had turned and she took the horse that Connie had dragged over to her, deciding to follow everyone away from the chaos ensuing.

She would turn back, go to the walls, together with Ymir, whom she had but moments prior, promised 'to live for ourselves' as she had said.

It was true, that Ymir had naturally not been able to say anything in response at the time, but she had surely taken her charging cry as one of agreement.

Had Ymir already been thinking then? That she would run off like that? It couldn't be. It couldn't have been by her own choice. There had to be a reason for which she couldn't follow her own advise, as Historia reminded her of it.

There was no way... that Ymir had chosen her own path as she chose to live for herself...

The soldier with the glasses tending next to her, still kindly held her as she was offered more to drink. Another carriage had rolled off into the distance along the wall, leaving only a couple left for the remainder of those who were not severely injured.

Historia looked at the group of four huddled together with Jean, Connie and Armin who was holding one of the few remaining torches had their back to her. The only one who she could see clearly was Eren, now wordlessly staring at his hand in wonder.

"I know it's a tough spot to be in Eren, but... in order to get you back..." Jean continued, "... one of
the commander's arms was eaten… Mikasa's ribs got smashed… and 60% od our soldiers died, including your friend Hannes."

"Whether you're really worth paying that kind of price… is something I still don't know." Jean's words were sharp, however they purely spoke the truth as he heeded the gravity of this newfound discovery, "as to whether the people who were killed to get you back died for nothing… that depends on you now, doesn't it?"

Eren and Jean fixed each other an odd look. She, in all her time as Krista, had never seen the two agree on anything, and only bicker about nonstop, clearly showing signs that no amount of interference would stop either of them.

In the past, she herself had considered trying to stop the two of them, at least for their first year, she had hoped they could settle their differences. However, if she had to put her finger on the reason why she never did, it would be –

"You sure got preachy after you joined the Survey Corps, didn't you?" Eren sighed, seemingly slightly bemused.

"Huh?!" Jean exclaimed, "oh yeah? What about you? You've turned into an indecisive whiner!"

"No Jean, he's right. It really is creepy how serious and responsible you got all of a sudden," Connie joined in agreement, "you still look like a bad guy though…"

"Hey, you guys!" Jean glanced as Armin who likewise showed that he could not disagree, and instead the tallest of the group opted out, "don't forget I'm the one who swooped in and saved your precious Mikasa!"

"Thanks, Jean." Eren pronounced.

"… Huh?!" The soldier in question twitched in fright at the unexpected words the brunette had spoken.

"Thanks to you..." gripping his hand with force, Eren spoke with newly defined determination that he had been given, "I don't think I have to hesitate anymore. You're absolutely right. I just have to do this."

Connie looked at him incredulously.

"I'll control the Titans." His words seemed to vanquish the pulsing pain away from Historia. "And I'll seal the whole in Wall Maria."

The realisation and understanding had began to lead Historia out. This was it. Her tiny candle of hope.

"I'm going to catch Reiner and Bertholdt and make them pay," Eren continued laying out his will on the spot, "I'll make sure the deaths of Hannes and everyone else really do help humanity keep surviving. That's how I should repay them."

Historia rose. It was clear what she had to do. Like him, there was no time to hesitate. She had to cling on to the one thing she had left. Otherwise… no… she couldn't go back to that state.

A state of emptiness which she had been thrown out of by chance and managed to grasp something…
"Hm?!" Rico jolted at the unexpected strength shown by the small girl, "wait!"

"Krista?!" Everyone had turned to her as Armin called her by a name. A name which she no longer was going to stand by. "it's –"

"No." She denied it. Historia denied the name that had been used again to refer to her. That name meant something which she no longer was.

"My name is Historia." It was after all, a promise she had made.

A name which was defined by one thing. The wish to live for herself... a wish that she didn't know the true meaning of, nor what it entailed.

That was why...

"Eren," Historia swayed forward towards him, still finding it difficult to stand correctly, "let's hurry... to the other side of the wall."

… she needed to get back to the person who would teach her what it meant.

The moment their eyes met, he knew. Eren could take one look at Historia and understand what he was seeing. This wasn't the girl he had constantly seen throughout his days in training. The girl whose mask was as clear as daylight on a cloudless afternoon sky.

Instantly, he knew. There was no instinctual dislike building up, pent up and directed at this girl anymore.

"... you shouldn't stand up yet – " Eren said, alarmed at the way in which the blonde was stepping towards him, and grasping out at him.

"DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME!" Reaching out and grabbing at the nape of his neck, Historia practically screamed at him. Both her arms slipped down to his shoulders as she all but tried to pull him down to her face.

"We have to get Ymir back...!" she yelled in his face, begging him to comply with her demands "if we don't soon, she's going to go far away!"

She had almost touched his skin, but somehow only brushed it through the worn out material. The buzzing between the two contacts was practically unnoticeable... but it was still undoubtedly there...

"H-hey..." Rico wandered over, calling at the small blonde who had broken out in frantic steps toward the titan shifter.

"W–wait – " Eren tried to interject.

"You're strong, aren't you, Eren?!" Historia continued begging. It was more than that. Eren was quite possibly the only hope she had to get to Ymir. No matter how skilled of a soldier, they would be no match against Titans in such a variable terrain. Her only hope, was Eren himself. "Use your Titan powers to do something!"

If he didn't... then Historia would lose her only guide to her new life, fail and only become empty once again.

"Huh...?!" Historia suddenly fell to the ground with a painful thump against the stone wall.
"Calm down, recruit." Rico bent down as she reminded the blonde, "you're completely exhausted."

"..." Eren wordlessly followed suit as he crouched down in front of her. For some reason, he expected this.

Eren had expected Historia might in reality, be someone like this... but –

"Even after we were taken by Reiner and Bertholdt... Ymir was worried about you," Eren began. Their faces were no more than a foot away, yet Eren could have seen the tired and defeated eyes, not wishing to accept something from a league away. "It seemed like all she could think about was you, and how you'd survive this..."

He felt her disoriented breaths warming up the cooler night air, only furthering the pitiful expression the girl had. Eren wasn't certain if he should say it now... but he felt she needed the truth to be said –

"... But, There's one thing I don't get..." he questioned, watching her eyes, which were fixed to the floor, demanding that he say his mind, "in the end... she went with them of her own free will, right?"

"Yeah," Connie added, "I couldn't believe she'd run off to save those two..."

"She was a mystery to us until the very end..." Jean concluded as he knelt down as well while Armin hovered over with the torch above them.

"I can't stand it..." Historia gasped again, violently trembling. "why...? She... chose them over me..."

Why?

"S–She said we'd live for our own sake... together..." her face enforced her betrayal and disbelief, "but now she's left me behind..."

"Traitor..." Historia swore forcefully, expelling all the anger in her body as she laid out her claim out of anger, "I'll never forgive her..."

"Krista?" Jean hesitated, nervous of seeing the angel like girl saying such things. "What's wrong? This isn't like you."

The response to his question sent shivers down the backs of three of the four boys as they reflexively as they felt the desire to back away from Historia. The sole exception... was Eren...

"HA HA HA...! Krista?!" Historia's laughter seemed almost maniacal as she declared thoroughly her decision which she would not back away from, "I'm done being Krista. She's gone now!"

Just like him, hardly a couple hours before, he had broken down at the loss of Hannes... because after all...

"She was a role they gave me in order to keep me alive..." Historia explained cryptically, recalling back something which she was struggling to remember "yeah... a girl from a book I read as a child– "

He had truly believed that nothing had changed since that day...

"I... think?" An old memory seemed to resurface, yet still too vague to be comprehended.
? Fall of the Year ?

Blue and green. The petals were a delicate touch of colour. Its hue was almost exactly in between the azure and aquamarine sky and the deep, ultramarine ocean.

The stems were as green as the grass and foliage you would normally be accustomed to in such a land.

At its centre, the colour changed, to a more bleached out white and then a dull yellow colour like that of the dying sun trying to reach past the clouds.

The flowers were surely just as artificial as the glowing crystal cavern walls in which Eren had been bound into by chains.

The blue meadows were filed with flowers that should not exist. Mutations of life which should have never happened. Unexpected side effects.

He somehow remembered these flowers from somewhere.

They symbolized striving for the infinite and the unreachable, for ecstasy, for freedom. Of course, this wasn't the only think that the flower stood for. A more sensual attribute was present within it.

Though it did not know the name of the trampled flowers, the fallen bird yearns for the wind to come.

He felt that a verse similar to it had once been chanted somewhere. Somewhere… across the sky… a ways away from him.

He was sitting in the field again. A place he had often rested by off the road leading out of Shinganshina into the interior.

He plucked one the flowers, stealing its life and future away as he gazed into it.

A mirror which seemed to create a perfect image of himself. This reflection was neither unbroken glass nor clear water. Yet it was as if he could clearly make out his own reflection completely in it.

Seeing your own reflection in the petals of a flower…

The answer to the secrets behind it, surely meant that they lay within himself… or maybe...

---

Early Fall of the Year 850 – Underground Reiss Chapel

Her father had led her down the stairway once again after that. Perhaps her mind should have still been in a frantic mess of confusion, but instead, the understanding burnt her deep to the core in the ice like world.

She looked up at him.

Historia looked up at Eren, and glared. She wanted to glare at the being behind him, the one who stole Frieda from this world, the man who fathered Eren and put him where he was now.

It was mostly the former, after having awakened memories of forgotten times, she had realised that
she had never truly been alone back then.

However, the person who was with her had since parted.

The resentment boiling up, was in a desperate need of a direction to be aimed at. So she chose to direct it through Eren, at the man known as Grisha Jaeger.

Eren's own lifeless and accepting eyes did not respond in the slightest at her. There was a hint of recognition as they saw her, but nothing telling her any sort of answer.

His father was not in Eren's eyes the instant she looked. And she felt bad for glaring at him immediately.

The futility of judging Eren by the sins of his father was self-evident. But… though it made her feel bad to glare at him like that, her hatred was white hot as ever in the shining halls.

Her father had left barely a minute ago, and said he'll be back soon. As vague of a 'soon' as any.

Historia griped her first and glared at the floor.

'If… if only… no… why… why… why…’ the question bounded in her head. She tried to drive back the anger as she looked back again at Eren, hands and body still bound in chains, rendering him motionless even if he hadn't been struck as he had moments prior.

"Eren… can… can you hear me?" Historia bit back every negative thought that was trying to possess her. She somehow managed it, but Eren gave no response as he looked back at her.

Historia gasped out, and looked behind the back, to the direction which her father had left. She had been ordered to wait here, and to not move until he returned.

It was absolutely quiet, with no sound of movement at all. Of course, it wouldn't be difficult to muffle your steps so long as you stepped right, however her father shouldn't have a reason to be skulking about in a safe haven for him… at least for the time being…

Historia looked up at Eren once more, before hesitatingly taking a step towards the left staircase this time.

She knew how to reduce the sound of her footsteps as much as she could, but kept her eyes on the steps she ascended on regardless.

Eren still took no notice of her. She approached his back, and moved to the right side of his body, crouching under the large chain which held Eren's arm up.

There was little space to really be standing before the edge of the ridge, however with her small frame, there was just enough space for her.

She bent down onto her knees, right in front of him.

Eren still did not look up to face her.

He was laying his body out, and letting the chains themselves hold his weight up.

He looked… so vulnerable…

She was in pure white and clean clothes, used by the nuns who took care of the chapel above ground when it was not being used.
By comparison, he only had his more newer trousers, and was shirtless in front of her, revealing his well toned physique.

Historia breathed out, ruffling Eren's hair slightly and steadying herself. She was eye level with him, yet Eren kept his eyes firmly fixed down, stunned in silence as he had been ever since she first touched him.

"E… Eren..." she whispered.

She made sure to remain mindful of any sounds of approaching footsteps as she cautiously reached out her hands and brought them to cup both sides of Eren's face.

Lightning flashed briefly again, but no memories were unearthed this time. He felt cold, lifeless. She angled her hands and lifted his head to face her, eyes moving ever so slightly as they stared into her own.

"Eren..." she began to plead, "please… I can't let you go when it could upset my father… but please… just do something, anything to give me a sign… please… tell me that your father had a reason to kill my half sister and the rest of her family..."

No movement. Not the slightest in his eyes nor in any other muscle in his body…

"E-Eren, please…. p-please..." Historia bit back tears of anger, "please… just tell me in your eyes… that… that..."

Historia faltered. Was she asking something which Eren did not have an answer to? She didn't know. But the thought crossed her mind. 'Does… Eren truly not know…'

A movement. Historia let out a soft gasp and looked to Eren again whose cheeks were still lightly pressing against her hands.

She stared back into his jade crystal orbs, teardrops manifesting at the corners of one of his eyes. She gaped at it.

A sign that told her that Eren couldn't argue or say anything contrary to the story her father had told her.

"I see..." her voice grew deadly. And then –

Her hand brushed the tear being collected up in Eren's eyes, wiping it away before it was even released.

"It's… not your fault... " Historia assured, looking honestly back at him, "… it'll be okay… you're… not your father..."

Eren stared back into her. And Historia stared back.

The understanding was reached the two them. Historia would not judge Eren by the sins of his father.

Eren had seen it somewhere in the memories he had seem moments ago. He looked into Historia's ocean eyes, the a colour far truer from those of diamonds.

At some points he had seen the colour of diamonds, something that he wouldn't have been able to see in his own lifetime.
Glowing like the stars against the dark night sky.

The instant Eren looked into Historia's eyes, he felt everything which Historia wanted.

An answer. To the reason why his father did something like that.

He was the son of Grisha Jaeger, the man who had killed her half-sister, and cast her into the belief of true emptiness. But he wasn't him.

Eren and Historia were separate individuals from either their parents.

They were both nothing more than themselves.

"Eren, listen, I'll – " Historia was about to suggest. The soft clatter of footsteps in the distance startled her.

She gasped, and swiftly removed her hands from the sides of Eren's face and dodged under his arm again, as she quickly scuffled silently to wear she had been left at earlier.

She had just managed to make it down her stares when her father came walking into sight. Historia casually adopted the look as if she had been pacing around.

"It seems we're finally alone," Rod noted, not noticing Historia's position.

"Father," she acknowledged, watching him drop the bug onto the smooth and polished cavern floor.

Eren managed to lift his head again and look over at the man, who was searching through the bag he had returned with.

"I'm sorry I kept you waiting, Historia," shuffling through the containers, Rod pulled out a particular case.

He popped it open. The syringe lay in its compartments, along with two needles resting to either of its side. Along with it was a single cask placed within as well.

"Father..." Historia wandered over cautiously, relieved that she had not just been caught by her father. Here eyes landed on the bag and noticed that there were more contents in the bag than just the case which her father had picked out. A set of iron keys also caught her sight, "what is that?"

Eren saw it. The instant he saw it, he understood.

What his father did to him, what her father was about to do to her. Cold sweat broke down at this. It wasn't merely being concerned for his own life and the future of humanity in the hands of this man.

It was Historia's own life as well. The father was about to turn its child into something else.

"Listen, Historia. This may sound ridiculous to you..." Historia's father rested one of his arms on his daughter's shoulder, "...but Frieda hasn't died yet."

"..." Historia's heart started beating, fullled on by an overwhelming amount of hope which made her almost forget everything that had happened, "...what?"

"Frieda's memories live on," he embellished. "Do you want to meet your sister?"

"You will be the one," his father's words sounded in his memory, "to avenge your mother!"
"… yeah," Historia, enchanted by her revived wish to see her older sister again agreed "I do."

"Very well." It was about to be concluded.

Eren threw himself against the chains. His renewed strength would have been a match to just about anyone's.

The chains clanged, reaching their full length and refusing to break at a single one of the links.

He bit the metal in his mouth, desperately trying to crush it by grinding his teeth deeply into it.

Break apart the chains, crush the demonic injection and get away.

There was no way that what Rod was doing, was for the good of humanity.

There was no way someone like that would sacrifice their own daughter like that.

His life was secondary, he could survive a hit if it came down to it. Historia could not.

He wasn't going to let her become a Titan.

*Break free.*

Something deep and ancient seemed to curse through him.

But he could not escape.

For he was chained, forevermore to the weight of another age…

---

**Late Fall of the Year 845 – That Day**

"And just like that… everything changed..."

The air seemed to absorb all sound, focusing everything upon the massive flame-like hand grasping the wall, blazing red in the evening sun.

- **On that day, humanity remembered…**

In his emerald eyes, Eren saw the soundless flight of two free birds, the common ducks which traveled in flocks all across the land. They flew together, unaccompanied by anyone else.

"At that terrible moment… in our hearts… we knew… "

Up and down, over and under, they flew on together, merrily dancing in the gleaming evening sky, as the steam expelling flesh of a massive corpse lifted itself to peer over the wall itself.

- **The terror of being dominated by them… and the shame of being held captive in a birdcage…**

The destination of the two duck companions was turned away, the need to escape away from the immediate threat first taking priority. A dream was outweighed by revenge.

"Home was a pen, humanity cow..."

Everyone was sweating, fear taking its true embodiment within all the spectators looking up at the
Amongst all the trembling and frozen bodies of dread… Eren felt like he was isolated.

That the being looking over the wall had its eyes drawn into his, and his own needing to stare back into the being.

It wasn't drawn to either Armin or Mikasa who stood next to him, no less frozen as they could only gaze up at the being.

It was at Eren alone that it seemed to be staring at.

As if the being had once looked at someone familiar to the child. They had never met before, yet the semblance of familiarity was all too powerful.

As if a mutual understanding was meant to be present between the two, yet neither could comprehend.

The unconquerable wrath and destruction of a firestorm to which they both belonged to.

In Eren's viridescent orbs, he no longer shook. Instead they became chained in place as he felt connected to this behemoth.

He felt that –

---

? Fall of the Year ?

"According to this book, the majority of this world is covered by water called the 'sea'!"

– Saltwater that was too vast to ever be depleted.

*Encircling all of the land, created from the blood dripping across the earth creating the oceans in which mighty beings dwelled...*

"Water that glows like fire."

– Fire water. Flaming at incredible temperatures.

*The first to form, the inferno in the South that would begin the twilight - Múspellheimr*

"Fields of ice."

– Ice ground of the frozen tundra that stretches to the sky.

*Then came in the North from the eternal darkness, the snowstorm - Niðavellir*

"Giant rocks which take days to climb."

– Fields of sand composed of sand dunes and desolate lands.

*Grinding up the existences of that which made up the land in between of various manifestations - Miðgarðr*

"Imagine how huge the outside world must be."
– The outside world must be ten times bigger than inside the wall!

*Expanding over the empty space, originating from the melting waters in between the fire and the ice* - Ýlívágar

"Listen to me… we should do it ourselves someday… we could have adventures like the guy who wrote this book…"

– In the outside world.

*From which, the creation of, came from…*

Eren had seen them only a few times when he had visited Armin's house. His parents were a happy and content couple, who both worked in the crafts.

They had been planning to build a hot air balloon, and use it to fly out over walls, and go see the outside world. But…

They had been killed at the government's orders. Eradicated from existence and never to be seen again.

So long as the government stood in their way… such a dream was impossible…

…

That was a lie.

He could see it. He felt like he had already seen it all…

At least, in the past, what it once was beyond the walls…

But the memories had been forgotten soon after…

Yet the feeling still remained. The familiarity. The nostalgic vibe.

The colours, the shape, the texture of everything.

The outside world… was already know to him…

But… there was one thing he didn't know b–

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 – Underground Reiss Chapel**

The sounds of explosions boomed in the distant ends of the caverns.

"Our enemies seem to be closing in," Rod warned, looking back in concern, "we need to hurry Historia."

"All right," she muttered, turning to face Eren, who was now desperately struggling against the chains which held him now.

"MMMFF!" His eyes pleaded everything, for Historia to get away from that man, though his voice could not be conveyed in the slightest. "MMMHH!"

"What is it, Eren…?" Historia narrowed her eyes in confusion, yet managing to catch the honest
"He's become aware of his Fate," Rod answered in turn, "he's realized where his sinful life has led him..."

"The power he stole will be returned to its rightful place..." the middle aged man glanced back up to the sudden change in the boy's act before beginning his explanation, "Historia. Inside of you."

"Huh...?" She murmured, the peculiarity throwing her off.

"MMMHHH!" Eren continued his fruitless struggle as his strength began to fade.

"This cave was created about a hundred years ago..." Rod began, "... by the power of a very special Titan."

"The same is true for the three walls. That Titan protected humanity from other Titans by creating those gigantic barriers," he said, referring to the events of 107 years ago. "That is not all the Titan graced us with. It wished for a life of peace for us humans who remained, so its power reached into our hearts... and altered humanity's memories."

"A handful of bloodlines were unaffected..." Historia let her jaw hang slightly loose at the wealth of information, "but neither their descendants nor any other humans remembered anything about the history of the world before a century ago."

"No one knows..." Eren likewise continued to listen while glowering at the man who was retelling this all yet had kept it to himself, "... how the Titans appeared."

"Except for one person... Frieda Reiss." The image of the woman flashed through Eren's mind again. "Frieda possessed more than the power of the Titans, she also knew everything about this world, and how it came to be..."

"She gained the power of the Titans, along with those lost memories of our world... at the age of fifteen." Rod recalled, to the day in which he chose to pray once more for a miracle from his brother's death. "When here, eight years ago... she ate her uncle, my younger brother."

*She had trembled before injecting the syringe into her arm and following the duty of eating her uncle, as per her father's wishes.*

_In response, the man had smiled sadly. Knowing full well, that Frieda would be no less able to reveal the secrets of the world than their predecessors had been._

"This is the duty that the royal line, the Reiss family, is charged with," Rod continued to watch on as the ritual reached its completion, his wife sobbing on his shoulder, "Frieda inherited the power of the Titans and the memories of the world, from her uncle, her predecessor. This same act had been preformed generation after generation for a hundred years."

His brother was torn in half by the mindless Titan which quickly began evaporating immediately, as the semi-conscious body of his eldest daughter emerged once more.

He held her in his hands as she lay back, hoping, once more that this time... things would be different...

"Granting that one human these powers and turning them into a living compendium... and entrusted her with humanity's fate." Rod remembered the conclusion to it. Just as with his brother,
he could only see the eyes of a supreme and ancient being residing within the eyes of his daughter. "She was free to reveal the mysteries of this world… or to disclose them to no one."

"Of course… no one has ever chosen to reveal the secrets of the world… this is the proof that they inherited the philosophy of the first ruler of this land, the creator of our walled world."

The cavern was silent for a moment. Rod had gotten lost in his recollections of the past.

"… Father?" Historia prompted again.

"…! Oh, yes…” "we need to hurry…”

"Well, you know our situation. Titans have breached the walls. Many, many human lives have been lost. Human even fights human in this foolish world we now find ourselves in," evoking the problems of the present, he laid the finishing grounds of his intentions. "If Frieda had used her Titan's power… none of this would have happened."

Eren's heart thumped. If what this man was saying was true, then surely –

"I dare say we would have even been able to rid this world… of the Titans, too."

There it was.

A dream of revenge that could be accomplished with the power that was in humanity's possession.

"… Th– If that's the case…” Historia asked, feeling a fault in the logic lying somewhere, "… then why is all this happening?!"

"Because…” Rod highlighted the root of all the problems, "the power of the Titans that was stolen from Frieda… now resides inside of Eren. Its true power can only be used… by descendants of the Reiss royal family."

The words reverberated within Eren once again. This was… exactly as Eren wished.

For someone to use a power like that…

An oath of revenge.

The sacrifice of others who longed for a day like this.

The very act of liberating the people from the scourge of the Titans from the face of the earth.

However –

"So long as he is its vessel… this hell will not end."

It was something that he himself could only accomplish by entrusting this to someone else.

"What...?" Historia realised what it meant. The person to inherit the power, and to be the one to carry out such a duty. "Then…"

"Whoa, whoa." The sound of wires being winded out interrupted the discussion. Kenny had appeared, descending from the ceiling which he had been unnoticed until now."Hold on… So… you're saying whoever eats Eren can only become the true king if they're part of the Reiss family?!"

"… Yes. So?" Rod inquired, unimpressed at the soldier's appearance once again.
"S... So... there's no point in me turning into a Titan and eating Eren...?" Kenny tilted his face upwards, revealing the sweat and swell of feelings in the face of his strongest soldier.

The man who had spent the past 2 decades of his life had finally arrived at the moment which it had all been leading up to.

And the result was not to his liking.

---

**Early Spring of the Year 829**

"Talk to me, Grandpa," Kenny spoke, the young adult waving his unwashed and blood covered longcoat out as he stood over the deathbed of his relative. "You're gonna die soon, right?"

"Kenny." The elder Ackerman questioned, unimpressed. "Did you kill more Military Police?"

"Heh. If ya mean the ones snoopin' around here, they're feedin' the trees, now," he said, grabbing a wooden chair from the corner of the room, dragging it over to the bed in which his grandfather was resting in, awaiting his end.

The cottage was small. A single room comprising of the bed, the kitchen and the table. Everything that a dying man would require.

A fireplace burned on and provided warmth in the room. The bedside was by the window, through which the morning sun rays shone through.

The old man coughed from the durst that had gone into circulation from the uninvited yet not unwelcome visitor.

At the windowsill, there was a single plant, gradually growing elderly while entrusting the sunlight to its successors.

"I don't mean to... spoil your trip to the afterlife, but..." Kenny leaned back against the chair, hands in his pockets, deciding to give the last update on the family's condition. "I finally found my little sister. Kuchel... she was working at a brothel in the underground. One of her customers got her pregnant... she won't listen to me and says she's gonna have it..."

"As for that other branch of the family..." he continued, "looks like they've moved south, near Shingashina district. But I guess someone got in the way of their business, too... so they're still poor."

He paused, awaiting a response from the eldest of the family.

"What's goin' on? Didn't the Ackermans use to be a warrior family close to the crown...? How'd this happen?" Kenny's grandfather turned and studied him, the root of everything that has happened tried to be unearthed. "Now there's only a few of us left. The whole clan's on the brink of extinction. What'd we do to make the monarchy hate us this much?"

The weak gaze of the elder contrasted with the serious one peering back. A connection between family.

"C'mon, grandpa. Tell me!" Kenny pleaded, waving his hands emphatically. "Doncha love your grandson?"

"Hah... the grandson I doted on..." wheezed the grandfather, carefully lifting himself up, "... has
become Kenny the Ripper, terror of the capital."

"I had planned to protect you from the monarchy by taking our ancestors' secrets with me to the grave..." the old man rested back, letting the bed linen slip as he unveiled his secrets, "... but now it looks like there's no point in doing that..."

"The monarchy doesn't hate the Ackerman family... they fear us." He enforced the meaning behind the difference. "The King fears the Ackermans because he can't control us."

"My generation was the first born after humanity moved inside the walls, so it's not as if I know everything." The man was around 80 years old, an admirably long life to have lived.

He looked aimlessly as he recounted the memories his own father had before him.

"But I do know that our clan was the royal government's sword and shield. We had a key role in ensuring humanity's continued survival."

On the windowsill, the slowly dying plant still touched and took the offered sunlight for itself, though it did not cast the sprouting seedlings into the shadow.

The candle light had melted slightly near to the top, though the waning flame had since been put out on the night before.

"And... the rest of humanity, the vast majority who did not belong to one of these central houses..." the man stated, "...were one people, who all came from the same bloodline."

The plant that grew out of the pot had two trunks, intertwining with each other to the point where its roots may have been from a single seed.

"In other words, there is one major race living within the walls..." the grandfather reworded the information "... alongside a few other bloodlines who each have but a few members."

Like the seedlings which were growing for themselves, separate from the dominant occupant of the soil in which they thrived.

"One of those lines is known as 'Asians', a people vastly different from us." The elder changed his line of sight to his grandson as he continued, "the problem was... the existence of different bloodlines disrupted the King's ideal system of rule."

"The King hoped to rewrite the memories of all humanity... wipe out history..." The will of the ruler of their land was announced to Kenny for the first time, "... and realize his dream of perfect peace and order."

"...huh?" frowned Kenny, "Humanity's memories...? What're ya talkin' about?"

"The power of the Titans... generations of Kings have inherited and guarded the power of the Titans," the old man resumed.

"Hmm..." The listener hummed in response.

"They used that incredible power..." the man remembered it, more from the tales of his father, but from himself as the witness to it, "... to build the giant walls that protect humanity from the Titans... and eliminate all traces of humanity's history outside those walls."

"However..." The difference between those who were enslaved, and those who were not. "The
memories of people from these minority bloodlines, including ours, were not affected by the King."

"!" Kenny became alerted to his answer. The source of their long history of persecution up until now.

"The King's power to alter and erase memories of the past... only works on members of this majority race," he recommenced the tale. The partially eaten bread on the plate by the table lamp, "in other words, to complete his great work and eliminate history... the King must use other means to silence the minority bloodlines who are not affected by the power of the Titans."

"Ya don't mean..." The grandson let his voice wander.

"Yes... while most of the lines obeyed... two groups objected to the King's philosophy," the grandfather confirmed, "they have up their status and turned their backs on the monarchy."

"The Asian bloodline..." he listed the names of the two opposers, "... and the Ackerman family."

Kenny sat almost limp. It was more than he had been expected to be told. His grandfather had kept this from him for the entirety of his life.

"In any case... my father's generation didn't pass on humanity's lost history to their children. They hoped to protect their children from the monarchy's purges..." the Head of the Ackerman family evaluated, "in the end, the head of our family offered his own life to ensure the survival of the other Ackermans and was executed... but now, it seems, his noble sacrifice was pointless."

The room was left hanging in silence for a while. The knowledge sunk into a newer generation of the Ackerman family.

"... I see... I think I'll believe this story'a yours..." Kenny decided.

He had spent his life, dedicating it to violence, never knowing why his family had been subject to the years of persecution, yet not minding it.

Kenny was powerful. It was quite clear in any fight as to the unordinary gap in powers between him and his enemies.

His family's persecution hadn't meant much to him, though it had cost him losing track of his sister for many years.

But –

"Things will be... more fun that way."

---

Early Fall of the Year 850

"... or so... I thought until this very moment." Kenny was much older now, already past his physical prime, yet still no less dangerous.

Since that day however, he had chased a different goal in mind. It had been time to change battlefields. He had chased a dream of his, based on this knowledge, into a different kind of fight.

Now however...

The previously unrevealed, set in stone facts... destroyed everything in the uttering of a few words.
He lunged forward, and lifted Rod up by the collar of his shirt, bringing out his gun barrel and shoving it into Rod's left eye.

"F… Father!" Historia yelled, uncertain as to why one of her father's soldier had turned their gun upon him. However, her father's life had suddenly been thrown onto the balance.

She couldn't let her father die.

"Do… do you think I am lying to you?" Rod gritted his teeth as he eyed the soldier who had served him and his brother.

"Nope… I waited for this day because I knew, this one time, ya definitely wouldn't lie," assured Kenny, driving home his repugnance. "This is your precious succession ritual, isn't it?! Ya knew my intentions this whole time, and ya strung me right along… ya used me. Quite the charmer…"

"I'm grateful," Rod insisted, grasping Kenny's arm with both of his own, trying to regain the ability to breathe better, and to wiggle out of his grasp. "I'd always thought my brother taking a stray like you off the streets was just another of his crazy whims, but– "

"If ya insult Uri one more time, you're gonna find half your head missin'!" Kenny threatened, resentful of how he had always thought of Rod, compared to his lost friend. "It's all the same to me!"

"Stop it!" Historia jumped, and grabbed the man's rifle armament as she pulled it down, away from her father.

"Let go… of my father," gripping tightly to it, the blonde tried to persuade this man. She glared at the man, telling him to let her father go.

Rod glanced down to her, still struggling as it became harder to breath.

"Aw… Historia, ya poor thing..." the experienced soldier easily broke free from the small girl's strength, waving his gun away and causing her to stumble. "Ya get it, right? After what he told ya? This old man's tryin' to turn ya into a monster… and make ya eat Eren."

While still keeping Rod hanging from one his arm, he pointed his gun up to Eren, still present and enchained to the cavern from the outcropping directly above them.

Two pairs of eyes peered directly into each other. Hers met his.

It was then when she realised first. What Eren had said back then…

..."So... what do you... want to do?"

...

Eren… the boy who wished to wipe the Titans out… more than anyone…

His desire for revenge that had fueled him…

The fact that even after his vow had been twisted by the revelations of the truth… he had still known what is what he wanted to do…

An ability like that… she wanted to understand him… and she wanted to be able to do…
something just like he could.

Historia had been drawn to Eren for that very reason, the uncontrollable power that he had.

"Just... focus on as you are now... and just do what you have to do to figure out what it is you want..."

She had taken to studying him, without thought and for a reason.

It was… just as Eren had said… she wouldn't get any answer from doing something like that…

But his words had nonetheless shaken something awake inside of her, something that had not been yet unleashed after Ymir had left her.

The door to what was within her had been left open…

But the person who was within had yet to climb out back then…

She had sat by the rushed camp on the break of night with him alone, as she followed his wishes and watched him go ahead, always knowing what he wants to do...

Laying down side by side as they watched the sunset and the leaves, watching him and finding an odd sense of satisfaction within her as she made a choice to try and learn from him…

Sitting at by the table opposite him as the leaves departed from the trees outside, being told something which… meant so much to her…

It had only been for a short time… barely a couple days since then… yet in those few moments, Eren had influenced her into ascending past the open door.

She was outside of it. Already a step away from where she was at the start.

Yet immediately, she had not known what direction to go with.

So she had followed Eren, the one who had given her a sign of the way she should go.

Then… everything had changed. Their short time alone with each other had ended. Once they had met with everyone else, things had been decided for her.

To play the role of a queen. There was no path of retreat from this. Historia could not stand up to the strength of the Captain, and no-one and nothing else could change that.

The fact was simple. It was the fact that the strongest won in a contest of strength.

She had given in. She had cast her eyes down, after being told that she was not permitted to follow Eren.

Historia Reiss had a different role to fulfill. Another act to play.

She had been pushed so quickly back through the door she had stepped out of, into a space of nothingness.

A different door then opened to the side, and chains flew out of them, snatching her and hauling her through that door.

However… now the owners of those chains had been pushed back, and she had been freed, by the
man who was her father.

The man who said and did the things which she had yearned for a long time ago. Her first desire… a dream in which she could have parents like the ones children had in her books.

The first great gate to which Historia had stepped out of, on her own, moving forward to a dream of her own…

A constant turn of being kicked back through the gateway she had tried to go through…

But right now… she had ran a very long distance in a short space of time…

Her older half-sister, Frieda, had been there in the place of a parent…

She had been… exactly what Historia had sought for… The simple yet honest dream in which there would be a person there for her… That was all she had wanted…

Just like in the stories in her books… the only thing she had to herself when Frieda could not always be there for her…

Stories… which brought her wish into existence… just like the one that was akin to her own name…

In the memories she had now returned to herself… she was not empty…

But Frieda was gone.

And her desire to not be empty only amplified to possess her.

Instead, her father had revealed himself.

Historia didn't want –

"Aren't those my orders?" She declared, setting her determination fiercely.

"…!" Kenny became startled in disappointment, still not having let Rod go.

"What's so sad… about becoming a Titan and saving all of humanity?" Historia asked.

Her resolution unwavering.

'It… may be selfish… no, it is very selfish of me...' Historia had thought moments before making her decision, '… It... might not be fair on Eren, but... I want... for my father to stay by my side... and for my sister to come back...'

She had stared into him, telling Eren of her wish. Just earlier, she had been prepared to say that she'd do anything to convince her father to set him free.

However, that clearly wasn't possible. Her father could not possibly let Eren go when he as the vessel, was needed to save humanity.

Her father…

Surely… couldn't be wrong about this…

She had looked into Eren's eyes and asked him. His response was clear. There was no longer any
attempts at trying to break free from the chains.

Eren had heard what her father had said, and what his own father had done.

Maybe… she was deciding things for herself… but she felt…

That Eren was not going to object to such a thing…

Though… she couldn't tell precisely what he wanted either...

"Huh…" Kenny waved his arm, challenging her composure, "… ya think it's your mission to eat your friend and upset your little tummy?"

"Yes..." Historia looked up. Not at Kenny, but at Eren, laying out her objectives. "I'm going… to eat Eren… and bring my sister back!"

'And Eren… will also at least… reside in my mind as well… right?" Historia did not mention all of her thoughts aloud.

"Then I'll inherit the history of this world, and..." she proclaimed everything, the words dancing through the caverns, "… wipe out all the Titans!"

"That… is my mission!"

Historia's words resonated to the deepest part of Eren's soul.

Eren had felt it instantly.

One look in her eyes and he knew.

Historia's words were no mere exaggeration.

He felt like her own willpower was not inferior to his own in the past in the slightest.

To eradicate the Titans… if someone could accomplish something like that… then why should it matter… if it were not him?

That was the conclusion which Eren had reached.

"Whoa, whoa. Hold on. Historia? Have ya forgotten what your dad did to ya?" Kenny finally dropped Rod to the ground, spinning him round as he kept a firm grip of the man's jaw. "Ya were born in the first place out of someone's misery. Because this man disregarded his place in the world just so he could feel good with a house servant..."

Historia stood her ground, feeling the pressure unfolded in the truth against her.

The man may be right… perhaps she was only born from a single night of her father seeking pleasure, but… so long as now… her father stood by her… then...

"Your mother had ya because she thought, if things went well, maybe she could become the master's wife, but your existence was a disgrace to his subjects and assembly!" Kenny reminded her. Of the mother and the only reason she was permitted into existence. "Everyone wished ya'd never been born, includin' your daddy here!"

"But then, the unthinkable! Those pedigreed brats of his went to meet their maker, all in one night!" recalling back to 5 years ago, back to a few days after Frieda would have died, "and
whaddaya know, this nice old fella comes strollin' up to ya!"

Her father had taken of his hat and introduced himself for the first time. He came… out of nowhere into her life… but… so long as her father… cared for her now...

"The assembly ordered us in the interior squad to cleanse the stain on the royal honour by making the whore this man slept with disappear, along with her kid," Kenny explained. The reason behind their appearance that day, with her father bringing her to their attention, "but he decided to protect you, and just you. He saved your life by coverin' up your birth and sendin' ya to the military. Only the wallists knew to keep an eye on ya."

So...

"Why was that?" the former serial killer demanded an answer from her. "'Cause his paternal instincts finally kicked in, and he decided to start lovin' his daughter?"

"Beep, wrong! HE JUST NEEDED YOUR BLOOD!" Bringing her father's mouth open, Kenny shoved his knife down the chubby man's mouth as he pursued, "not only that, this piece of shit doesn't want to turn into a titan himself, so he keeps orderin' his brother and daughter to do it!"

Historia shuddered. Not wishing to accept his words. Refusing to buckle under the resolve she had spoken of.

"I got more! He even tried to hide the fact that Frieda and his brats were dead, and the power of the Titans has been stolen!" Historia listened on, watching as the knife cut her father's lips and jaw, likely scratching at the back of his throat, "all 'cause he was scared that, without that power, the Reiss family wouldn't be the centre of the universe anymore!"

"He only started spittin' out some details when eren used the power of the titans ti take back Trost district!" Not letting him catch his breath, Kenny exposed everything he could think of. "D'ya know how much we lost in those five years?! How many precious lives?!!"

All this time… Kenny had been playing in Rod's hands from the start, suffering on for something which could never become true.

He wasn't going to treated like the fool without taking a shot at bringing his enemy down. And… He truly did not want to see… the same thing happening again…

"O'COURSE HE DON'T GIVE TWO SHITS ABOUT ANY OF IT!" The old soldier yelled at her, wishing to make her realize the truth. The brother of his parted friend… truly disgusted him."NOT HIS FAMILY! NOT HUMANITY! AND CERTAINLY NOT YOU, HISTORIA!"

"ALL HE CARES ABOUT IS PROTECTIN' HIMSELF!" Historia looked away, as her father choked, unable to begin to approach the intensity of the act. "SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF YOUR FATHER NOW?!"

She was… hesitant now… but...

"… He's wrong… " Rod grasped the knife in his hand, and pulled it away from his mouth, coughing out as he did.

"Whoa!" Kenny explained, impressed at the sudden display of strength. Something which he had not seen in the man before.
"His...toria..." her father spoke up, holding the knife back with all his strength. Kenny could easily overpower him, but he was being allowed the chance to speak, "there's something… I haven't told you… yet… I can't… be allowed to become a Titan… There is a reason..."

His daughter stared back at him uncertainly, trembling with contradicting wishes and stuck between uncertainty.

"You can't..." the man pleaded, "… trust anyone else..."

Historia was perplexed. Why hadn't her father told her? No, there had to be a reason. She had to believe… that there was a justified reason...

"Huh!" Kenny let go of the man, causing the latter to collapse on the ground and protect his throat instinctively, regaining his breath. "Is that so?"

"Father!" Historia rushed to his side, bending down next to her wheezing father, placing her hands on his back to comfort him.

"Kenny," Rod rasped, not showing any animosity to his strongest soldier,"you've served me well all these years."

He looked up at the towering man.

"I'm proud of my brother's decision that day," the man claimed. "Your own ambitions… will not be realized but..."

The tall man had an unreadable expression.

"I know that humanity… will find the right path." Rod assured him, wiping the blood from his mouth. "You're free now… find something else to live for, and die an old man."

The soldier had been dismissed from service. An answer that he did want had been given to him. Being told to abandon everything by the very man who he had played along with, for the sole purpose of turning his back upon one day.

"… That don't sound too fun," said Kenny, swiftly turning around and marching toward the left stairway leading up to the bound Titan shifter.

His long strides allowed him to ascend three steps at a time of the crystal carved stairs.

"Kenny… what are you doing?" Rod began panicking, troubled by the intent the man had in mind.

"You just turn into a Titan," the Ackerman replied, not bothering to face Rod again, "I won't get in your way any longer."

The clattering of his steps halted when he arrived at the back of the Titan Shifter, lifting Eren's head and going to unlatch the mouth restrain.

"Just… count to three first." He unlatched the back of the wired contraption.

Eren weakly spat the metal out, freeing himself from the unpleasant taste of metal against bone. Rod clenched his teeth in frustration at the sudden development.

"Both of ya can become Titans and fight to the death," Kenny explained his terms, bringing out his knife again. "If Historia wins, peace reigns eternal."
"If she loses to Eren..." He twirls his knife before bringing it down to Eren's forehead, "… nothin' changes."

"It's probably hard for ya to bite through your tongue right now, ain't it?" Kenny asks rhetorically, before dragging a cut along Eren's forehead, "I'll make a little notch for ya."

"AAH!" Historia yelled. What had she been yelling at?

The fact that Eren had now been freed and could transform into a Titan at any time, or the fact that he had just been cut in a dangerous place.

Historia felt it was probably both. A mix of two contradicting effects was what caused her to yell out in concern and fear.

The blood seeped down, getting into his eyes, and covering much of his face.

More than enough of a wound to transform immediately.

– But Eren did not transform.

Historia furrowed her eyebrows...

"Ya want me to keep drawin' breath till I die in my sleep?" Kenny grinded his teeth, "who could even call that livin'?"

"HISTORIA!" Her father was instantly in her face, screaming her name as he held out the syringe, already injected with the liquid.

"…!" She was scared back from her thoughts and into the seriousness of reality.

"Don't worry. This shot will let you become a powerful Titan. I chose the Titan that was most suited for battle," Rod assured, eyes firmly set in determined panic, "you'll lose control once become a Titan… but there's still hope. Eren is still in those restraints."

The man turned to the bound vessel, his head falling back down as the blood droplets splattered as they dripped bit by bit from his forehead.

The sound of a clock ticking back and forth, as time ran out.

"Now hurry! But when I say eat him, that's not exactly it..." calming down, he made sure to explain the details. The vessel of the Founding Titan hadn't moved nor began shifting. "You just need to bite through his spine… and ingest his spinal fluid."

Historia became perturbed the moment that the idea of eating someone else, no less her… friend? It was difficult to say what they really were to each other… but it was not something she could just be impassive to.

Their connection… was –

"Well, I'd better take a big step back," Kenny noted, aiming his anchor upwards before letting out the gas from his ODM gear, allowing him to shoot up towards the ceiling.

"HURRY, HISTORIA!" Her father shouted at her, entrusting the syringe to her before swiftly hopping back away from her to a safe distance.

Her heart thumped. And thumped. She felt like it was popping out, tearing out of her body from the
frenzy of emotions twisting her in all directions.

She gritted her teeth with her resolve on the line. Aiming the direction of the needle held in her right arm, into an angle at her forearm.

Her heart beat faster, and faster.

And then –

It stopped.

Perhaps she wasn't going to be able to do it anyway.

She didn't feel she could have brought herself to do something like that.

Her uncertainty of her father had been renewed when Kenny had revealed details that her father had not.

She didn't think she could have brought herself to do it anyway… not to… Eren…

But for certain at least, a different reason altogether caused her to lower the needle away from her skin.

But… everything truly just… stopped.

Everything went silent as her beating heart seemed to vanish in an instant.

The cavern felt empty, devoid of any movement.

The ice like caverns unmoving.

From somewhere, the light seemed to illuminate the entire unnatural world. Separating the spectators from the tools.

The cold sweat and anxiety seemed to be pulled out of her, and went to roam somewhere in a faraway land.

The only occupants in the world that the light contained, was the chained soldier, and the the girl who was about to make a choice that would change everything.

"… Wh- … why?!!" Historia looked up at Eren once more, her hand shaking at the held instrument, "Eren… why don't you turn into a Titan?!"

Eren continued hanging limply upon that which bound him through the curtains of light.

"If I become a Titan…" Historia reinforced, begging for an answer, "… you're just going to get eaten… why don't you do something?!"

Or rather, wishing… from the deepest part of her… that it was not going to end like this.

That something… anything… might just happen that would save both her and him.

Something which could provide a true solution to everything…

A way in which she could adhere to her father's wishes and Eren would live...

But no one was going to come to the rescue here….
Her soul thumped.
The light thumped.
The world thumped.
As if it was alive. Inside the stomach of a beast.
They were alone together.
The only ones who were in this world –
Eren and Historia.
He lifted his blood drenched face as he looked to her, teardrops ready to break.
The face of an absolute state of emptiness.
Historia's eyes instantly furrowed. His expression taking her back and making her feel just as powerless as he looked.
It was more than simply pitiable, it was truly, deeply… heartbreaking.
Empty eyes.
Just like… she had for so many years.
The realisation of an impossibility.
The destruction of dreams.
A state of nothingness.
"DO IT!" Her father urged again."HISTORIA!"
Somewhere in the distance. He was far too far away for her to hear.
Her right hand, holding the injection fell limp at her side.
She was instantly paralyzed by how she could see herself in him.
Crystal and light. Just like a reflection in the mirror.
"… Never needed to happen..."
Eren's voice was breaking. Breaking and unbelievably faint.
Yet Historia could make it out more clearer than ever now.
But… for Eren to say such a thing… it was… unimaginable to her until now.
"... What?"
She let out. The light sucking the two of them together.
"Me… my dad… "
Eren began…

He began his self condemnation into the emptiness…

"If my father hadn't done what he did five years ago… your sister would have been able to take care of everything, right?"

He reassured her of what her father had told them.

"Just because my father and I stole the power of the Titans from its rightful place… so many people died..."

He condemned his father's sin.

And he bore the penalty of it for himself.

Because of the result it meant… for everyone.

"Armin's granddad…"

- Those who were sent to their deaths against their will.

"… Thomas..."

"… Mina."

"Mylius…"

"… Nac."

"Marco..."

"… Everyone in Squad Levi."

- Those who had fought with their lives against an enemy without the knowledge to defeat them.

"The residents of Stohees District..."

- Those who played no part against the enemy.

"… The soldiers who tried to rescue me."

- Those who fought back against the enemy with the knowledge of how to defeat them.

"Hannes..."

- Those who fought for debts, dreams and desires.

"And so many more I don't know..."

The chains which bound him crushed him yet held him together at the same time.

"I… could never atone for all of that..."

A price to be paid, that could never be paid back.

"It never needed to happen..."
It would have been better for everyone else that way...

"All of those days we spent training..."

Revenge creating a drive for power.

"All those dreams about what could be... past the walls..."

Of the outside world.

"All those times... I would stare at the clouds... searching for something..."

Eren closed his eyes once more, the memories of bygone times as he prepared to face the end of his life in determination.

He looked to Historia, letting loose the overflowing floods trickling down his face.

"From the day which we sat together by the table listening to the wind at the approaching dusk..."

Historia gawked at how personal it had become to them both.

That day... which meant so much to Historia... was something which Eren himself was now speaking of to her...

"And the same day on which we went out to see the last sunset and the leaves from the trees fall..."

The path which she had chosen to walk on then... following him...

"And the short time we spent just together which followed..."

Trying to understand herself... just like she thought she once did...

"... The moment which we first met..."

— — —

'Wh... at?' Historia's mind shook in disbelief, uncomprehending the this time cryptic reference. She couldn't understand what he meant right now.

But more importantly, she asked herself –

Was this... even Eren anymore?

She didn't know.

But... what she did see... was just how familiar he felt...

To her...

The tears began falling at last...

Mixing with the blood as the clattered the ice cavern floor.

Hitting the ground and spreading out widely.

Eren had not been trying to hold them back in the slightest.
The only reason why they only fell now, was because…

Historia remembered.

The day in which she held the exact same look, watching her mother leave her, by the nine branched tree by which knowledge was attained.

She had been denied of her existence.

She had been denied of that which she sought.

She had thought –

...

"I… never needed to happen..."

...

"Do it... at the very least... I want you to end it for me."

Eren handed Historia the rope of his noose.

The axe of the executioner.

The sword of the end.

"Historia... eat me... and save humanity..."

His judgment was in her hands.

His fate was her choice to decide.

He gave her his life.

He gave her himself.

He gave her his judgment.

"It's... up to you now..."

In his last moments. Eren truly... just wanted Historia to be the one... to end it...

Historia, and Historia alone.

Not anyone else, only her.

It had to be her.

No-one else.

...

...

...
"Eren… That day… "
She remembered it clearer than anything else…

"The time you called me… normal."
The two of them, together.

"That made me really… happy..."

…

…

…

Eren didn't reply.

He bowed his head.

And waited.

Historia lifted her right arm again and brought it to her left forearm.

The source of her resolve had completely changed.

Incomparable and unparalleled to what it had ever been before.

She pierced her fair skin with the needle, causing a small puddle of blood to seep out.

The world erupted with light.

And then –

Historia blinked.

Uncertain as to what she had just seen.

A fresh new layer of memories.

The massive rotting spine of a Titan.

The broken and mangled body of Ymir.

"Ow!" Her younger self squeaked, holding out her hand as it stung.

"What's wrong, Historia?" Her sister had asked.

"A splinter… it stabbed me..." Historia answered,

- Then the freezing and bullet like snow of a blizzard, as she stared into her best friend Ymir, watching her through the sheets of snow.

It was early winter in both scenes.

"Oh no… let me see," her sister urged as she gently held her hand, "what is this, a wood splinter?"
"I tried to go see you, and..." the young girl had tried to explain.

"What...?" Frieda questioned, "... you tried to cross the fence?"

"Yeah..."

The splinter was gently pulled out, reliving her of the pain.

- "Dedicate your hearts!" The instructor shouted once more.

- "Yes sir!" Historia had shouted along with everyone else from her group. Aside from... Ymir who stood to her left.

"... You know you should not do that," her half-sister reprimanded her, "you can't cross the fence..."

- "Hey... girl..." Ymir had wandered over to her unimpressed, "you're trying to do a 'good deed', aren't you?"

"Didn't I tell you..." Frieda's eyes and character changed instantaneously, "... not to cross the fence?!"

The memories had flooded through her mind as quickly and swiftly as a wave from the ocean, disappearing with not a trace yet leaving an impression behind on the memories of the rocks.

"What's wrong, Historia...?" Her father asked her, appearing at her side at the sign of her inability to proceed further, "are you scared? You just have to inject that serum into your body, that's all."

Her cold sweat returned.

Shattered once more by knowledge.

Again and again, her resolve seemed to falter.

The more she learnt, the more she stumbled, uncertain of herself.

No absolute truth in sight.

"Father... my sister... why didn't she fight?" Historia drove home into the gap of knowledge she had an issue with from the start.

Kenny looked down upon the scene, Rod and Historia talking too quietly for him to hear.

"... The hell?" He muttered to himself.

He hand off from the ceiling in the same spot from the crystal pillar.

"You've got no guts Historia..."the old man complained to himself, "Hurry up and transform... into the ruler of this world..."

He gazed down upon Eren's blood stained face.

The eyes of a monster which he had sought after... where not there.

If... his dream could not be accomplished... then at the very least... he wanted to see them...
He wanted to see the eyes of the departed friend who lived within...

"... Not just Frieda. In the hundred years since humanity was first trapped by the Titans..." Historia continued querying, "... why didn't the Reiss family ever get rid of the threat of Titans and free humanity? Despite having the power to control all Titans..."

The syringe was pressed into her arm, a small stream of blood flowing out of her at the point of contact. Her thumb had yet to squeeze the end or even brush against it.

"I remember," she recalled, "sometimes... Frieda would start acting like a completely different person... like she was being possessed by something... she'd say that we... were sinners..."

From comforting her, to scolding her, to yelling at her, to criticizing her.

"And afterwards... she'd get really depressed. Like there was something constantly troubling her..." she looked at her father and asked clearly, "was that because... she inherited the lost memories of this world? Did she inherit the first King's ideology, too...?"

Her father's eyes glimmered in sadness.

"That's right. The First King Reiss, the man who created this walled land..." Rod answered, "... wished for a world where humanity was ruled by the Titans."

Eren and Historia became equally perplexed simultaneously, listening to Rod's new tale.

"The First King believed that was the way to true peace... I don't know why," he grasped his daughter's hand fiercely. "It's only known to those who see the memories of the world."

"!" The pain caused Historia to shudder as the needle was dug deeper into her flesh. She looked back up to her father, who's eyes were frozen still.

He remembered going to see his father, who always studied the texts in their personal library.

"I learned that firsthand. My father acted the same way when he inherited the King's ideology," recounted Rod, "both my brother and I wanted him to free humanity from the Titans... we asked him time and time again.

In return, they only bore to witness to the eyes of a monster. "But he did not grant our wish. Nor did he ever reveal why."

After that, several years later. "Eventually, the day came when my father had to entrust his role to a son. My younger brother volunteered himself, but he gave me a mission of my own in exchange."

The younger took the role entrusted to the elder.

"He said he wanted me to pray..."

The ritual had been completed successfully, as had been down for the past 80 years.

"When I saw my brother's eyes after he had inherited the power of the Titans... I understood what he meant."

The eyes that had been passed down from generation to generation.

Unchanged.
Unchanging.

Unable to change...

"My brother had become the sole creator of this world… and its ultimate governing force. An all-knowing, all-powerful being," Rod affirmed. There was not a hesitation in his mind.

"Do you know what that's called?" He asked his daughter.

Historia stared back wordlessly in response.

A being that had no equal.

That was what her father believed.

"God."

- A God chained and bound by the laws it created, the laws of its creations, and the laws of the world.

Limited, shackled and restrained.

Its ability's lost.

Thought it was still –

"Our word for that… is God."

– A God bound in Chains…

"There is meaning in every catastrophe. Whether humanity is fated to perish… or survive,… that decision is in God's hands…"

Rod moved his hands over the syringe, angling it rightly as he prepared, confessing to his last wish and his own goal.

"My mission is to summon God back into this world… and offer my prayers to her," he said. "I'm sorry for not explaining everything earlier… but… what other choice do we have left?"

Historia stared into him.

Rod Reiss, the true ruler of the walls.

Her father.

She stared through him and studied him.

'… There isn't one.' Historia's thoughts answered, 'no matter what happens, there's no hope for humanity with the King's power inside of Eren…'

– The God bound by Chains

'… But I'll be controlled by the First King's ideology… just like my sister and all the heirs before her…' she thought back to her sister and the drastic change in acts.

"I'm praying, Historia…" Rod bowed his head, indicating the truthfulness behind his words, "…
that God will guide humanity."

'Yes... all we can do is pray...' she concluded.

That was all.

Pray for a miracle.

For someone waiting to come who may solve everything.

"Krista... I have no right... to tell you how to live." The words of the feckled girl from the top of that tower.

The syringe needle was ready pointed in the right direction.

'I must let God dwell within me... That is my mission...'

- The only way to save humanity.

"So this is just... a wish of mine," the person closest to her at that time had said.

"So..." Her father pulled her back into the present.

'And... it is the way my father... wants me to be...'

- To fulfill the young girl's dream.

The hammer was brought down slowly, the liquid squeezed, about to enter her body...

It was dawn.

The sunlight had opened up the dark night.

"Live your life... with pride."

– The woman who had said those words made a choice and jumped down off the top of the castle.

Historia made her own choice.

The glass shattered upon crashing to the blue cavern floor.

Historia had thrown aside the syringe and the liquid within was splattered across the ground.

Rod looked upon it.

The realisation of what had happened dawned on him.

It was irreparably broken.

Historia had just denied her father and everything which she had been trying to cling to.

Because she had found an answer.

The spilled liquid that permitted the transformation into a Titan was gone.

"HISTORIA!" He grabbed his daughter as he roared at her in rage. He gripped her shoulders, preparing to crush her.
Historia was faster, She grabbed her father by the colour and used the momentum from his weight to life his chubby body over her and bring him crushing to the ground behind her.

The same thing which Eren had once done to her, around a year ago in training camp.

The middle aged man landed with an unhealthy thud, causing his spine to crack and some bones to snap by the combination of his unhealthy body and the strength his daughter used.

"GOD?! WHAT A LOAD OF BULL! YOU'RE JUST SAYING WHATEVER YOU CAN THINK OF TO MANIPULATE ME AND SAVE YOURSELF!" Historia yelled, spitting out from being sigusted at the sight of her struggling father.

Her father tried to wriggle, yet unable to turn himself over from the pain which he had never felt before.

"That's it! I've had enough!" Historia clutched a fist to herself knowingfully, "I won't let you kill me!"

She spun around quickly, eyes landing on the bag which her father had. When he had opened it earlier, she had noticed the ring of keys present amongst the various serums.

She grasped the bag, and pulling it up she rushed towards the left stairway, away from the still squirming form of her father.

She remembered what Ymir had said. That they were similar. Ymir had replied that she didn't want to be friends with her.

It was obvious that Ymir had wanted something akin to that. A unique connection of understanding… and for her to follow the same path she had in the past…

Historia had abandoned Krista, as per her promise.

Their circumstances may have been different, but they were both given roles to play. She didn't know what sort of thing Ymir had to do in her past, however she felt it must have been similar in some way.

Ymir had wished for something in her final moments of her act. 'That if she were to be born once again, she wanted to liver her life for no one but herself…'

Ymir had gone. She had taken her own advise after she had reminded her of it in battle. She had gone to help Reiner and Bertholdt of their own wishes.

It was… just like Eren said back then… just like he had seen through Krista, and understood Historia, he had somehow been able to comprehend Ymir's actions faster than she could…

Ymir had chosen to do what she believed was best for her. She didn't know much beyond that Ymir seemingly owed them something…

One way or another, their paths had split…

However, her words came back to her again now.

The advise telling her to live her life with pride.

Pride.
A feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements.

To do what she wanted to do, for the sake of thinking 'that's good enough' to herself.

Just like Eren had told her. Ymir had done the same.

Something… which she understood… above all else...

She began walking towards it.

**She began waling the path towards a wish she could understand.**

The one thing which she knew above all others. The feeling of **emptiness**.

She would keep walking and walking, until she did all in her power to act in response to seeing a feeling manifesting in someone else.

The one feeling which she knew better than anything else.

The instant she saw Eren like that… empty and alone…

Wishing that it had been better if they hadn't been born…

The similarity between them in that moment…

Gave her the answer she was looking for,

Eren gave her the answer which she was looking for beyond the gates.

He had just shown her, the path.

**She was going to follow that path until the end.**

*Because that's what she wanted to do...*

"...?!") Eren was astonished by what had just happened. He watched Historia skip up the flight of stairs, rushing to him with all haste, "wha?!"

"HA HA HA…!" Kenny's laughter could be heard from above. He aimed his gun to the side and let out a shot. "That's good, you two! This is getting interesting!"

Historia peeled the bag open, digging for the keys as she rushed over to Eren's back once again. Eren twisted his head over his shoulders to see her, "hey… Historia?!")

"Hey, what're you doing?!" Eren called back to her, seeing her jump down at the chains rendering his waist immobile with a set of keys.

"Welre leaving, Eren!" She answered focusing on finding the matching key and freeing him from his captivity.

"HUH?!" Eren cried out, being denied of the fate he had consigned himself to. *you need to eat me! You're part of the chosen bloodline! I'm not! There's nothing special about me! It's bad for everyone if I keep on living!"

His soul cried out. Yearning to be released from his past, to be free of it all.
He used the name of humanity to try and justify his choice to anyone.

When in truth –

"PLEASE, JUST HURRY UP AND EAT ME! I CAN'T GO ON LIVING LIKE THIS!"

He screamed out to the world.

He wanted to escape.

It hurt.

It was painful.

The feeling of emptiness.

It broke him apart.

Eren wanted to end it.

For his life to end right there at Historia's time.

He had abandoned his revenge.

He had abandoned his dream.

He had abandoned his memories of all the times he had shared with everyone.

'Historia… just kill me please… I just… want to vanish…'

In response –

Historia's hand smacked the side of his head, "shut up, you stupid! Crybaby! Quiet!"

"Wha…?"

- He was freed from his chains…

"EXTERMINATE THE TITANS?! WHAT A PAIN IN THE ASS! WHO'D VOLUNTEER TO DO THAT?!" Historia bellowed her newfound beliefs, "IN FACT, I THINK HUMANITY'S THE PROBLEM! WE SHOULD JUST LET THE TITANS DESTROY MANKIND!"

She tore the chains of him, enabling his body to move again.

Eren looked up at her.

In absolute awe.

He regarded her as she flung the rattling chains away.

She looked –

"GUESS THAT MAKES ME HUMANITY'S ENEMY!"

– Beautifully flawed and unstoppable…

She yelled her heart and soul out.
"Understand?! THE WORST, MOST DESPICABLE GIRL IN HISTORY!

Someone who opposed the survival of mankind for her own reasons.

Someone who would choose to sacrifice humanity's safety in exchange for a desire of her own.

Someone who stood in the way of benefiting the vast majority.

Historia was attributing such things to herself.

Perhaps they were true. Perhaps they were accurate.

Eren didn't know.

He didn't care.

What he did know, what he did care about, was that at that one moment –

"I'm letting you get away from here! And then… I'll destroy everything!"

– Eren understood Historia better than ever.

– And he liked her all the more so.

The true meaning behind every word she said.

Eren understood her.

And he also knew.

That Historia understood him.

And that –

*Ment everything to someone who is empty.

Just like Historia was, Eren now had become like her.

Marred by the nothingness that had been left within them…

Like two soulmates, crossing paths...

Historia leaned down, to the shackle on his right ankle.

Their eyes both suddenly caught onto the chubby man below them, dragging his body across the ground as he reached for something which was letting loose steam.

The remains of the Titan serum were already evaporating, the glass shards broken and exposing it to the air.

"Haah… Father… Uri… Frieda..." Rod called under his breath.

He crawled, crawled and crawled.

Until at last he reached it, letting his face fall into the small puddle, dampening the top of his shirt as the liquid stung his eyes, causing the water to leak out of them both.
Laying there, Rod spoke his last words.

"Wait for me... I'm coming..."

He stuck out his tongue and slurped the liquid.

Light exploded out of him.

Several neighbouring pillars were instantly destroyed.

Eren and Historia instantly looked away from the blinding light before both opening up their eyes at the same time to witness the sight of the massive human-like skull staring upside down at them.

It was coiled round as the massive spine crashed like a whip against the caverns, sprouting out like a flower shooting up from the ground at an impossible speed.

Historia beaked from behind Eren, his body slightly blocking the overwhelming level of heat that was bursting out from the Titan as its flesh was created, while Eren was exposed to the full blunt of it.

Rod Reiss's bag, which had contained several other Titan serums was blown back, its contents spilling across the floor and scattered by the boiling air.

"Whoa!" yelling, Kenny was flung off and hanging by a wire, the pillar he had been leaning up against just destroyed. His hat was sent flying from the sudden appearance of the hot wind, "Rod Reiss... that bastard... he turned into a Titan!"

A deep growl was traveling out from behind the emitted steam.

Historia held onto Eren, gripping him with her left arm firmly around his exposed chest.

Their hair was flowing backwards and Historia had to lie on her belly to minimize the effect that the storm of wind had on her.

Eren was pushed back but not released from the great chains which still held his arms up.

'If someone from the Reiss family... becomes a Titan... and eats me... ' Eren kept his thoughts to himself.

Things changed. Ever so quickly.

Their objectives, resolves and intentions would switch in the blink of an eye.

It was because each of them had a complicated mess of cerebrations. Thoughts and feelings which clashed, sometimes coming out dominant, sometimes forgotten.

Eren was caught in between his own wishes, and hose of Historia's.

He wanted to say his thoughts aloud. To tell Historia to run and escape for herself, to tell her that it's fine this way.

But he knew Historia would refuse. And he couldn't stop her either.

She was the who held the keys, unlocking him from the chains he was bound in.

Historia was following her own path, doing what wanted.
Just like he had told her.

Their roles had switched since, only in a few days.

He had become empty, seeing nothing less beyond that everyone would be faring better had he not existed.

She had become the one, in the past few moments, who knew what she wanted to do.

Eren heard Historia yell from behind him, seeing as if her grip on his abdomen was failing. "Historia?!

"No, don't bother saying it," she cut him off, continuing to try another of the keys and checking it properly to see if she could insert it. "I already told you, I'm setting you free and that's final."

Free.

Historia said it again.

That she was going to be the one to free Eren.

The words stimulated a reaction is his body, one that made him forget about the searing pain from the burning breezes.

Together… with Historia… Eren felt that –

No, now wasn't the time for that.

"It's not that… Historia, I..." he called to her, through the blistering gusts, "… are you… sure…?"

Eren already knew the answer. But if things kept up at this rate, they were sitting in front of death doors with the sand in the hourglass counting down to the moments the gates open for them.

Historia gasped, glancing again to his bleeding forehead which soaked his upper face, understanding what Eren was referring to.

What good was there in trying to save Eren if they both ultimately faded into dust, claimed by the heat?

Wishing to accomplish something yet being smote out before either the salvation or the enslaved met their end.

Failing to accomplish something, not from a lack or resolution, but from a simple difference in power.

It took more than understanding yourself, having a stupendous level of intension and having the strength to walk a path one chooses, in order to overcome all the obstacles standing in the way.

But that didn't matter.

Historia had decided.

Even if she were faced with death, before even managing to finish her first great step properly in her path, Historia would not falter.

She vowed to herself that she would not falter again.
Another key failed.

Historia switched again, the final key left.

"Yeah I am…" she said.

She had discovered for herself who she is.

She had managed to climb out of the emptiness by her own way.

She had made her choice.

Historia knew what she wanted to do.

From Frieda.

From Ymir.

From Eren.

She was going to follow the path she wanted to –

"I may be an enemy of humanity..."

Historia could happily take on the name.

It didn't matter anymore if everyone thought that it had been better if she were never born.

"But I'm your friend, Eren!"

Being there… for someone like her…

"I can't be a good girl… and I don't want to be a God."

She was not Krista.

And she never would be.

She couldn't be like the girl which Frieda might have wanted her to be like.

"But… when I see someone crying, saying… no one needs them…"

Whoever it might be.

Even someone whom she didn't know the secrets of like Ymir.

"I want to tell them… it's not true..."

She twisted the key after fitting it properly into the hole at last.

The first shackle opened.

The first part.

"No matter who! No matter where! I'll come to the rescue!"

Historia had already began.
"So, just wait for me!"

And Eren could never bring himself to stop someone like her.

- What Eren wanted… was to see her reach the end of her path… just as he reached the end of his own…

He was lost. Destroyed.

- But seeing Historia like that… to him, taking 9 steps at a time, while he couldn't even muster up 1...

Walking her own path...

– The path to the destruction of emptiness itself.

Welp, 100k characters, 20k words unintentionally passed, guess that's that. Just a heads up, next week's will very likely be late again unfortunately, but I'll try and do my best with it and hope that the longer chapter may satisfy, (so much for biweekly releases lol). And for sure, it won't be as long as this one, but hope you enjoy since more Eren/Historia moments to steadily increase from here on out.

And once more, please absolutely tell me if anyone is having trouble reading something this long in a chapter, or in general feel it would be easier to read as 2 separate chapters, and I'll split it! Didn't know whether to do so, or to not, but yeah, please tell me!

Ending Scene: WARNING MANGA SPOILERS - CONTAINS SPOILERS FOR SEASON 4 (OR WHAT WILL BE SEASON 4 AT LEAST)

Twins flames, dancing upon both ends of a split match. Their intensities would change dramatically and quickly.

"But… in recent years, a rebellion has occurred within Paradis, eliminating King Fritz's peaceful ideology."

Outside the stage performance continued unaffected by what was currently ongoing in the basement behind the stage.

"The Founding Titan has been stolen away by a certain man."

The wounded soldier was sitting on a chair, opposite him was a weeping soldier, shivering from understanding and guilt.

"The world is in danger once more. Someone has come to rise against King Fritz's peaceful world."

The trembling soldier awaited for his judgement. He waited for the punishment which the wounded soldier would deliver upon him.

"A man who rebels against peace. His name… Eren Jaeger."

Crushed by the weight of the things he had burdened himself with, the older soldier could only await the fate which would befall.
The speech continued, each word carrying a lifetime worth of weight upon the air.

The **enemy of humanity**, was sitting right before him.

– To humanity itself, as the vast majority, the wounded soldier was a threat to them. It would be absolutely to their benefit… if he ceased to exist.

"He's right. As Willy Tyber says, I'm the bad guy. I might destroy the world."

– But the wounded soldier was going to follow the path he chose no matter what…

**He had someone to return to someone…**

The soldier from behind the walls spoke words to the soldier of the continent.

Telling him that he understood him.

In response however –

"I can't stand this anymore… just kill me, please… I just… want to vanish..."

**To escape from pain and the pain he would endure in the future…**

"… I do not wish to die..."

– His own eventual fate was inevitable, but he wasn't going to crumble and let his true enemy have its way completely...

**Because he has things he believes in, things he wishes to accomplish, and those who he held above all else…**

"… Because I was born… into this world..."

– As they were all…

**As did all things… from their own source of origin… gain existence… fulfil their purpose… and fade…**

"Stand up, Reiner. I... get it now..." the enemy of humanity lifted himself off his seat, his leg regenerated back fully, no longer wounded.

He held out his hand, a true offering of many meanings, to the empty man crushed below him. His eyes curled upwards, empty and desperately seeking something.

– We're the same...

– The words that had been repeated over and over, hoping to provoke the reaction that was needed to prove it.

– Begging in its own right that he would get the confirmation he was longing for...

Their paths had been different, but they way we walked them and how they shaped both of them was the same.

'So... let's be the enemies of humanity together again someday...'
The blood stained hand completed the vow with the flame on the other side of the mirror.
And damn, I've realised that I've made an annoying error… yeah… for some reason I got it into my head that Utopia district was the northern outlier of Wall Sina, but no that's Orvud district… of course it is, ugh, got carried away when planning the concept of 'Utopia' later on, which can get scraped now but oh well. Yeah Utopia district is the northern outlier of Wall Rose, not Wall Sina, and yeah I've gone back to change those now, but sorry for the confusion!

But yeah, 2 mishaps there on my part, gomen'nasai! (Also annoyingly just time went somewhere... again - go figure!)

Discord invite: https://discord.gg/csQFFUC

"speech"

'thoughts' - Italics

Chapter 8 – Blutsbande

Early Fall of the Year 850 – After Rod Reiss turns into a Titan

"I may be an enemy of humanity..."

Historia could happily take on the name.

It didn't matter anymore if everyone thought that it had been better if she were never born.

"But I'm your friend, Eren!"

Being there… for someone like her…

"I can't be a good girl… and I don't want to be a God."

She was not Krista.

And she never would be.

She couldn't be like the girl which Frieda might have wanted her to be like.

"But… when I see someone crying, saying… no one needs them…"

Whoever it might be.

Even someone whom she didn't know the secrets of like Ymir.
"I want to tell them… it's not true..."

She twisted the key after fitting it properly into the hole at last.

The first shackle opened.

The first part.

"No matter who! No matter where! I'll come to the rescue!"

Historia had already began.

"So, just wait for me!"

And Eren could never bring himself to stop someone like her.

- What Eren wanted… was to see her reach the end of her path… just as he reached the end of his own...

He was lost. Destroyed.

- But seeing Historia like that… to him, taking several steps at a time, while he couldn't even muster up one...

Walking her own path...

– The path to the destruction of emptiness itself.

"You're feeling just how I felt for the entirety of my life… that's why, I need to make sure you don't...

– " Historia kept drying to gasp out, the hot air starting to burn her throat and make her lungs tremble in pain.

Keeping a firm hold around Eren's waist, Historia pulled herself around, trying not to slip from the build-up of sweat as a result of the heat that Eren's body was being subjected to.

"– AH!" Another sudden gust of hot wind was added in, and Historia was blown back before she was unable to open the his left ankle restraint, sent tumbling backwards away from Eren as she clutched the keys tightly.

"Historia!" Eren yelled as he saw her rolling back dangerously, panicking as he found himself unable to do anything but pull against the chains again, this time with great strength flowing through his arms.

The metal screeched. The chains began to unbelievably crack from his strength, but resisting all the same as Eren frantically pulled in panic to get to her, time slowing down as if he could process his thoughts abnormally quickly.

The contents of Rod's bag spilled over on the ledge, the various serums rolling away as they were pushed back.

Eren's mind didn't spare any concern, only the realisation that he would be too –

"Ugh..." Her head was about to hit the cavern wall, at the very least she would receive a severe concussion, and at worst have her head damaged severely.
But just before she hit it, instead of the hard and untouched wall, her head was grasped strongly, cushioning her from the impact she would have received.

"Are you okay?" said the young woman who had flown in, just at the right time using ODM gear.

"Mikasa?!" Historia yelled in surprise, finding Mikasa's hand was at the back of her head, protecting Historia from the hit.

"Gimme the keys," Levi called, swooshing down and landing on the ledge, having shot out of the waves of boiling steam just after Mikasa, followed by Jean, then Sasha and Connie, who were pushed back and landed vertically off the walls.

"Captain!" Eren called out in relief both for Historia and that everyone else was safe, "Everyone!"

Mikasa held out the keys to the captain, which instead were taken by Connie who was closer, as he and Jean followed the captain hurriedly to the chains which Eren was bound in.

"Dammit, which one of these keys is it?!!" said Connie, frantically thumbling around the keys, as he had difficulties

"Hurry up, Connie," Levi urged, hair blowing backwards and irritating his eyes.

"It's – one of the two smallest ones opened the lock to Eren's right leg!" Historia yelled frantically, as she managed to stand up on her own and try to help, wishing to rush over herself and back to Eren's side.

She was naturally unable to do so against the intense heat when she lacked the weight of the ODM gear and footwear to stop her from slipping backwards. Her words just managed to reach Connie however, as he immediately switched to trying the two ever so smaller keys.

"You hear me, shirtless wonder?!" Jean filled Eren in, latching against the opposite length of shackles, "It's not just that Titan! Guys with guns 're flying this way too!"

"Well… first of all… the roof's going to collapse," Levi considered as he looked up to see the falling rocks, easily large enough to crush them.

This wasn't good. Eren's mind instantly began processing the moment the captain mentioned it. If anything happened which caused the burning mass of the growing Titan to incline itself even slightly forward, then the ceiling right above them would fall before he would be freed.

"Hurry!" Jean called as Connie made a random noise in affirmation, switching to the second of the smaller keys.

Eren looked up, mouth ajar as he began to notice the Titan's size for the first time. Big, far too big. 'Everyone… please get back…' Eren begged in his head, just as he noticed –

The great mass seemed to lunge ever so slightly forward as if feeling Eren's wishes and choosing to oppose them out of spite, causing a particularly massive piece of stonework to fall earlier than it should have had.

Click. The sound of the chain restraining his left ankle sounded as his legs were freed again, allowing him the ability to stand once more.

His legs however had been aching from the constant kneeling at an uncomfortable position for the past hour, and he had trouble bringing himself to crouch all of a sudden.
"AH!" Someone yelled, likely Connie as he tried to pass the keys up to the captain. "No..."

It was too late. The boulder was right on top of him. Eren was about to be crushed head on by the early descent of it, both hands still bound in chains.

"Move!" The captain yelled, pulling Jean away in shock, as if seemingly abandoning Eren himself. Eren noticed how all of a sudden he was alone, still shackled. The decision was the most sensible after all. The rock was massive, if the captain and everyone else were crushed by it, death was instantaneous.

It was a massive risk to leave Eren like that, however their options were few. Either all four of them would get crushed, or they would bet everything on Eren's regenerative ability, making the decision in the blink of an eye.

So long as his body survived...

No, it seemed that a key to this was what resided in his own human nape if Rod had been telling the truth, so long as that survived...

Eren's back was exposed completely to the falling rock. He wasn't going to make it, and only he and Historia had learnt that moments prior.

He wasn't going to make it… unless...

Something struck the chain just at the connection to his left arm, which had already began cracking from the constant strain that had been put on it over a century.

Blood, sweat and the back and forth stretching of it had worn it down without the proper cleaning of it, and it had been screeching from being pulled to its limits at this very moment.

The effects of it had caused the chains to rust over the century after soaking up the uncleaned results from the previous inheritors at one particular spot near the wrists.

The chain shackling his left arm broke. The unexpected action caused Eren's whole body to lurch to the right, making him fall over the edge just as the large peace of stone crushed him.

Eren was sent swinging right ways, still hanging by the chain on his right arm as he heard the distant cries of his name.

What was that? He could have sworn he caught something being thrown at the chain out of the corner of his eye just before it snapped.

The hot air hit him again, causing his whole body to be pushed backwards towards the wall as he continued hanging, before –

The final change snapped. It had likewise been pulled to its limits now, yet Eren only noticed how he had subconsciously pounded the shackle several times instinctively, when the pain being flooding through the pulsing left hand, closed into a fist.

"Eren!" His name was shouted by several people once again, as he found himself flying back as he landed against the ledge floor towards the back, the impact recoiling through his whole body as it kicked out his breath.

Jean had appeared at his side, with the captain soon after, as they pulled him up and dragged him back away, towards the wall.
"Eren… thank god..." He found himself leaning against the centre, in the middle of everyone as he began to take in his surroundings once more and trying to catch his breath from the strained action that had caused his wrists to swell slightly, blood and tissue squeezed improperly around.

"You're safe now..." The little spectacle had caused everyone's breath to hold as they had all feared for his safety as he appeared to be thrown around like a rag doll, unable to do anything but watch his struggle.

But Eren was safe… for now. Everyone's attention turned back to their next impeding concern, all covering their face as they became dried up and burning quickly from the maliciously glowing being that was crouching before them.

"Are you alright?!" Eren heard the voice of the girl directly to his left. Historia, who was trying to cover her eyes mimicking everyone else.

The blue eyes of what would be soothing, rolling waves of the ocean hitting its limits. Eren nodded helplessly as he trailed, "what… the chain… something broke i–"

"… Really, just how shitty can this day get?" Levi's voice snapped him away from his question, as they all risked another glance at the growing Titan, now partially visible, "that thing looks bigger than the Colossus Titan..."

The Titan which began it all, face looking over the wall 5 years ago.

This being's leg however, alone reached over twice the height from the ledge to the bottom of the crystal cavern floors. It was crouching, yet its spine was easily grinding up against the ceiling of the halls, continuing to collapse the roof above them.

On the other side of the thick fumes of smoke, Kenny had managed to reset his anchor and set his trajectory away from the man he had formerly been serving while working behind his back for the whole time.

"… Hold on," Kenny yelled, narrowing avoiding another set of falling rocks, as he gazed up at the unbefore "whoa, whoa, whoa! Rod!"

He refired his anchor again, intending to return back into the cave until the Titan decided to stop moving or the rocks would hopefully restrain it.

"You've screwed up the pooch this time!" he cursed the Reiss's name in vain, "I finally see you didn't know any more about the Titans than the rest of us! Damn it!"

"!" The sound of gas being expelled and the approaching shapes of several people caught his attention. A total of about seven. Was that it? Of his remaining squad, only seven had survived the past couple of days?

"Captain Ackerman!" Traute Caven, his second in command, shouted as she led the group. Leading them closer to the falling –

"You idiots!" the eldest Ackerman tried to warn them, "Don't come any clo– "

The sounding of the cracks travelling across the ceiling, like breaking ice in the spring. What fell from above however, was not ice sinking in water at a leisurely pace.
The crack continued across the entirety of the cavern to where the entrance was from the stairs on
the other side, and all the way to just above the other end, where Eren was bearing the scolding heat
along with everyone else.

The last of the pillars before them all crushed, no longer having a stable support from the top, they
fell from the pressure of the hot wind from the Titan.

A similar ability that the Colossus Titan had displayed. An ability that they had not found any
method to fight against since last time.

"This is bad!" Jean expressed the fears going through everyone's minds, "there's no way out!"

'Why...?' Eren thought as he examined the titanized form of Rod Reiss, 'wasn't he going to eat
me...?'

If he had been asked of his wishes a few moments ago, he'd be saying this as his wish to die at last
and be freed from it all.

But things had already changed. In that moment... when he saw her... what he felt in that moment
as he looked up at her...

That wasn't the problem, the fear that hammered in his head was an undeniable conclusion at this
rate. 'Everyone's going to die...!'

After coming all this way to save him, to help him, it was truly going to be the end for them at this
rate. His sore back, scraped as he slid down onto the floor, one knee up, as he helplessly tried to
sooth the pain and throbs of every one of his limbs and head.

'Should I turn into a Titan?' He considered, trying to measure out the distances and chances. They
were obvious. 'No... the ceiling's caving in... my Titan's not big enough to be hold it back...
everyone's gonna get crushed...'

He could picture it so easily. Feebly crushed in a futile last struggle along with himself.

He had no intention of dying here or letting Rod consume him anymore...

However...

That didn't change reality.

Eren could not possibly use his Titan to protect everyone from the collapsing ceiling.

Blood that was still seeping down his forehead prickled his eyes as a bit slid into his eyelids
uncomfortably.

He could feel it now. The looks of several people looking expectedly to him, pushing all their
hopes on him once more, as they were prepared to entrust him with their lives.

Eren looked left.

To Historia.

To Mikasa.
To Levi.

Historia stared back.

He felt… something special bubbling within him as he did…

An abnormal content of strength, like a horn call reminding him of the most important things…

Mikasa gazed at him.

Levi stared at the enemy.

He looked right.

To Jean.

To Connie.

To Sasha.

All three of them met his eyes, looking at him expectedly.

Just like before, just like they would surely do again. Their one and only hope to change the tide of battle.

"… GH!" Eren's cry startled everyone as they witnessed the unexpected scene of a crumbled feeling to the person who had always been so sure of himself, "I'm sorry everyone..."

He clenched his teeth as he seethed upwards, droplets of water fighting back against the evaporating heat as they continued to trouble him as they stuck defiantly to his eyelids.

Eren was crying. Had it not become something he was accustomed to doing now? It wasn't an unusual sight for people faced with hardships to have.

"I was..." Eren trembled.

What was he going to say…

That he was useless?

That he had always been… from the beginning?

Had it been but 10 minutes ago, he would very well have continued on the same track of thinking, but –

"But... when I see someone crying, saying... no one needs them..."

Historia's words which instantly had clasped around his empty husk that his soul had departed from.

"I want to tell them... it's not true..."

Her wish at that point… the simple will that she possessed, commanding him…

It was far too strong for him to resist.

Historia… she looked… no, she was… she is…
"Hey!" the voice of the person on his mind called out to him, as he looked up at her, leaning against the wall, his shoulders to her ankles.

Historia's face was certain, unchangeable and strong against the pressure threatening her. She seemed to take no notice of it and instead her eyes had ironclad determination seizing them.

"… Armour?" The light glinting off the metal hit his eyes, distracting him as he read the label which he could see, not obscured by the rest of Historia's gentle and fair hand.

Eren inclined his head back upwards at her, looking at her questionably. 'Is this… from the bag her father had… just before...' he thought, examining her closely.

"I grabbed this from the floor just earlier, I don't know what good it will do, but..." Historia spoke, attracting the attention of the other five people who took notice of the metal cylinder Historia was holding in her right hand, offering to Eren who was trembling next to her feet.

"Historia! What's that?!!" Jean inquired across from Eren, uncertain as to what the blonde had picked up from where.

"It's… something which I noticed earlier in my father's bag…” Historia answered hesitantly. Back earlier, just as her father had laid down to take out the first syringe, she noticed it residing in his bag, a metal cylinder that caught her eye by the name written on it.

Before she had any time to think of it further, her gaze had been captured by the syringe which her father was opening up for her.

"I… ended up throwing the other at your chain just before you got crushed…” Historia admitted to her having picked up the bottle on instinct when she had seen that the keys would not fix the locks in time.

'So just then… that was...' Eren thought back to something which had hit the shackle to his left hand. There had been the sound of strongly colliding metal, then a splashing sound, as if the lid had been opened just before, which lubricated the chains to fall apart just in time.

Eren brought up his left hand. The shackle was still around it, but the first bind right off of it was pulled open yet seemingly dry, despite some signs of fizzing, as if it had been hit by the last straw of corrosion.

Which meant…

"Eren," his saviour called to him, offering out the serum again to him, "I don't know what good it will do… but I feel as though you should take it!"

Her declaration combined with the resolution in her eyes, as if foreseeing the events of a prophecy coming to reality.

A feeling of knowing exactly what she wanted to do, what she needed to do, and as if already knowing what will happen…

Historia's existence… was so alien yet familiar to him.

Mikasa's eyes peeled around from behind her, looking uncertainly at what Historia was urging him to take, examining it quickly before warning, "no… we don't know what that might do to him."

What was he to do with it?
Was a syringe required, an injection?

He didn't know. Eren didn't know… yet he felt a desire to consume this… as if he had done this many times before in the past…

As if Historia was looking at him once again, having seen him consume the liquid residing within on many previous occasions already.

"I…” Eren's thoughts became more en-caved, as a thick headache took refuge within him.

"What, now you want to play things indecisively?" Jean exclaimed, unimpressed at the unusual state that Eren was in, "you've been able to settle everything on your own before, haven't you?"

"Quit soppin'!" Connie picked up, reminding himself of how short their luck had always fared, "this isn't the first time it's been this bad!"

"Not saying I'd like to get used to it, of course!" Sasha added, fully in agreement with Connie.

"It'd be hard enough to escape even if we didn't have to carry Eren and Historia as we flew..." Levi enforced, concluding the options they were limited to.

"The heat from that Titan…" Mikasa included, finishing off the captain's thoughts "we'll probably be burnt to death if we get any closer."

Levi nodded in accordance and he turned to Eren and Historia, eyes scrutinising the serum she held, "unless..."

"No..." Eren mixed in his own assuredness at their inescapable situation, "there's nowhere left to run..."

"So you just want to wait here and hold hands until we either get crushed or burnt to death?!" Historia cried back at him, trying to urge him up just like everyone else was.

She had pushed away his thoughts of giving up on his life. And as a result, she had chosen the course which continued humanity's hell.

"Because we're… enemies of humanity?"

His heart beast seemed to pulse once and rest, then begin racing again.

A light unique to the two of them seemed to travel between the two of them, passing the might from Historia to Eren.

"… I'm sorry for always doing this to you, but… Eren," Levi's heavy voice drilled in once more, turning to Eren, "you have to make a choice."

Just like… back then…

When he chose to put his faith in his comrades…

He had lost them all.

He then put his faith in his own power.

And he lost as well.
Because Annie had been the one to take advantage of her superior power.

What was it that made this situation any different?

The extent of his powers was limited.

His options were either to take a gamble at gaining more power, or choose to back away from it.

The metal container was still held out in Historia's hand, her eyes never breaking contact from him, waiting patiently. Not doubting the choice he would make in the slightest.

An object she picked out partially out of interest, primarily on intuition.

Eren took hold of the serum in her hand, scraping his finger nails a little on her palm, causing a little static that felt good to him.

"AAAAAAAH!" Eren's agonising yell sent shivers down Historia's spine, along with everyone else's for various reasons.

Frantically running forward, Historia watched him in wonder after he had taken the metal cylinder.

Someone who always knew what they wanted to do. A few days ago, she had been certain, that out of everyone else, Eren would surely fit under such a description the most.

Yet now…

'I'm sorry…'

Eren thought, waving his arms furiously as he propelled himself, bending his leg dangerously close to slipping as he fought back against the steam.

… Historia's opinion of him had been uprooted unrecognisably.

'I want you to let me do it…'

He looked at this metal container once more in the fraction of a second, feeling the cool surface in comparison to the hot winds.

The label was just like he first read it on one side. The bit curling around it to its opposite side, was what had caught Historia's eye when she first saw it in Rod's bag.

'… Just once…'

He tossed it into his mouth, straining all of his jaw muscles as he caught it in his teeth and crushed down upon it. The metal was likewise rusting, suggesting it was created around a hundred years ago and been left to slowly corrode.

The liquid spilled into Eren's mouth, and the taste of iron of both the metal and his own blood filled his mouth.

His last thoughts lingered on what he could have sworn was written on the bottle's label.

What the full label read… 'Armour – Braun'…

*His family name… Reiner Braun…*
The light exploded, not nearly matching the intensity of the larger Titan's transformation next to it. The Titan's spine erupted out, swirling round akin to a fetus's curved shape.

'Let me believe in myself…'

al a o t e e r?

He was floating, yet unmoving.

All alone in the darkness.

At least that was the only way he could describe it, though it was too overwordly to be assigned with a single description from everything he had seen.

Eren was looking at someone. It seemed to appear into existence before him, or perhaps it had always been there.

It's face was covered by something, concealed from existence. He couldn't identify whether it was male or female. But surely… that thing was a human…

"Who… are you?" It said.

Its words were phrased strangely. A very different accent, pronunciation and tongue from what Eren was used to.

As if… it was trying to speak a different language from one which it was used to. Or maybe just not spoken a single word for hundreds of years.

"I … am subject… F-88. Who are you?" It introduced itself and asked again.

"… Wh… what? You're name is Ef… Efateyate?" Eren replied, trying to catch were the words were spoken from the mouthless face.

"No. I am… subject F-88. Who are you?" It repeated again.

Eren didn't reply. He stared back in confusion, feeling that he didn't want to just give out his that easily for some reason.

"... No matter if you don't know. It shouldn't be your time yet anyway... It's much too soon... She'll see to you soon enough… unless you get discarded before then..."

"...What are you?" Eren glared, the level of knowledge being kept from him getting on his nerves, "tell me everything you now! Whose this 'she' you're referring to?!

It seemed to shrug, not knowing the answer. "It's odd… that you do not know how things happen here… you're the first I encountered with no knowledge about it… no matter… I have to right nor reason to converse any longer..."

There it was again. Something spoken with a completely different sound again.

"I'll bid you not to panic... until our next meeting..."

And then it was gone, and he was left all alone again.

"... What's going on right now..." Eren tried to move his body, yet was unable to do so.
He focused his eyes down, trying to examine his body.

Long… so long…

Intense shivering and fear began to set in as he looked at his fleshless body.

There was no muscles, nor drops of blood o any other signs of organs he would naturally need to live.

There was only a skeleton, the shape of it at least seemed an accurate size of his own. Except he was missing the legs present in his bones. And the arms. And the lower body.

His rib cage was in one piece, and he couldn't see his face. He tried to whimper on reflex, the fear of not being able to move. He couldn't even scream. His mouth was sewed shut now.

And then there was his spine... extending out at an impossible length.

Columns after columns of it. Only then did he notice it.

His bones were not made of bone, but a cold metallic crystal shimmering brightly in the darkness.

The structure looked unbelievably fragile, like the soft breeze of the whispering wind would cause it to shatter instantly.

He looked down trying to revert the excruciating pain at holding back tears, begging to be formed, yet under permitted to form.

Eren's eyes followed the length of his spine over extension, uncomprehending what he saw until he saw something at the spot where it traveled to thousands of leagues away.

Down there... or up there? Over there, to where his spine continued to in the darkness...

A web...

Extending to the depths…

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 – About half an Hour After Eren eats the Armour Serum**

"Eren– "

A distant shout. Female. Desperate sounding could be heard from somewhere in the distance, combined with the heavy thudding between metal and hard stone.

"Eren!"

A male this time, equally shouting in deep concern. The sound of crystal cracking drew near.

And then a light emerged from what he only registered, had been total darkness.

"Eren!" Mikasa shouted as he was pulled out of something, hot steam following him out.

Eren immediately began gasping for breath, as if only just remembering the necessity of breathing. He tried to breath in, but his whole body seemed to only partially respond to his command.

He desperately tried to get his lungs working, yet it felt only a quarter of the amount he was usually
accustomed to, was working its way in. Eren felt dizzy, only noticing Mikasa's panicked expression to his right, and Jean's troubled one as they both pulled him out the rest of the way.

Eren's entire Titan body had crystallized all over, and extensive ropes of the same crystal had been discharged from various spots of the Titan body.

The rocks that had been falling down from the ceiling of the cave, had been caught outside in a massive web like structure that Eren's Titan had created.

The crystal, ethereally icy blue and unnatural, was just like the material which the caverns was made out of.

Its glow however was much duller, seemingly only reflecting the light rather than producing it itself. The same time of crystallization which Annie herself had displayed.

Except this time, Eren had been the one to do this.

"Hey, I found a way out!" Connie called from a ways above, informing Sasha from the surface outside.

"Thank goodness!" the brunette girl responded in turn. She leaped down through the whole on the surface, leading down to the recently formed cave in which Eren's Titan form had created with the fallen rocks forming the walls.

"Captaaain!" Sasha called, as she attached a hook to the top, and began her descent to the rest of the group, "we've secured an exit!"

"Good job," Levi replied, having sent Connie and Sasha up to find a way out, while he had gone to search in vain for any other remains of the content from Rod Reiss's bag.

"Oh… Eren..." Sasha muttered, noticing her shirtless comrade, as she set her feet on the ground and slipped out the wire, "so they managed to dig you out okay!"

"It took some hard work, though," Jean mentioned, letting his fractured blade slip out of his handles.

"Everyone's safe thanks to you!" Sasha waded over and immediately bowed down on her knees sincerely, as if she had been witness to a life-saving miracle, "but to me honest, that moment when you leaped forward bawling and running all creepy… I thought 'It's all over! There's no way this freak can save us!' I was all teary-eyed and sniffling like this, and..."

Sasha wiped the sweat of her face, remembering how moments ago she had all but accepted her impending demise, leaving her life in the hands of a person stumbling over.

But in the end, her faith had not been misplaced this time.

"Is this…" Eren began without finding a response to give Sasha. He looked up in wonder at the structure above him.

The face of a Titan.

His Titan.

It was odd when he thought about it… but this was the first time which he actually could see the fully formed features of his Titan shifter form.
He could remember fearfully, the shapes of the face of his mindless Titan as a child, yet this was his first time seeing the face which others always looked up at whenever they saw him in his Titan body.

Frankly… he felt as it was quite unrecognizable…

As if this Titan was not completely his own…

Oddly shaped jaw. Elongated and pointed ears. Hair considerably enough longer than his own.

… But it was undeniably his.

Like some sort of wild beast. He had naturally been able to witness the shape of his Titan body, and only its face had remained hidden until now.

The shape of a well built 15m class Titan.

Aside from… that face… that stood out from most… that seemed to contrast his own features…

"Yes. It hardened," Levi answered, strutting over to Eren, with Historia following him as well.

Eren's heart seemed to immediately strike an unsatisfied beat, kicking his whole body awake again. Historia's face had returned to just like before.

There was a much bigger issue that should be at the forefront of his mind. But he could only think how he hated that expression she was making once again.

Empty, distant and lifeless.

Like a doll being put on strings once again.

A deep sense of dissatisfaction was what first rolled through him.

"We cut you out of this Titan, but it hasn't disappeared," the captain spoke, distracting Eren's thoughts away, "I'd say this is pretty big news."

"..." Eren did not reply, trying to remember back and chase away thoughts, about the vacant feeling Historia had gone back to putting off, for later, "..."

"Oh…!" Eren exclaimed, his memory thumbing as he recalled the serum which he had consumed. "Where's that bottle?!"

"I've got it! I happened to drink from this bottle labeled 'armour', and then I turned into a Titan… " Eren began reciting everything to remember but the burnt fabric that Historia held in her hands caught his eye.

"We found Rod Reiss's bag, but..." the blonde trailed off, bits and pieces of the charred black remains of the bag falling to the floor.

**Rod Reiss.** Historia called him Rod Reiss. Alienating herself from addressing him as 'father'.

"Oh..." Eren realised the loss of further valuable contents.

"Everything else in the bag, along with the other containers that flew out of it… " Historia continued, looking down a bit annoyed with herself for not thinking of them sooner, "… either were crushed or evaporated. There's nothing left."
"..." Eren finished, "so it's..."

Historia had noticed the containers earlier, yet she had thrown one away, though she had at least successfully managed to save Eren himself from being crushed.

"No... they could still be somewhere... though it's unfortunate that Historia ended up throwing another away, it was a good course of action that she took," commented Levi. "And you used whatever was inside of that second bottle..."

Eren inspected the caverns around them that had formed – that he had formed.

"... And your Titan hardened, something that you were never able to do all this time. You supported the roof, kept it from caving in, and protected us from both the heat and the rocks," listed the captain as he continued.

"... A web.

"Obviously, no one taught you how to do this, yet... you created this huge structure in the blink of an eye... it's an absurd thought, but this must be how the walls were made, too."

The Ackerman had said that, yet... some distant memory suggested the opposite.

"In other words, it's now possible to seal the hole in Wall Maria," Levi leaned down on his knee, emphasizing the significance of what had happened, "we took the long way, and our path is littered with corpses of enemies and comrades... we're poor navigators, but... we finally made it to our destination."

The group took in what their leader had said, their focus now returning to the thought of recovering Wall Maria at long last.

'Recapturing Wall Maria... if we can do that, we'll be able to see what's in the basement at my house," Eren thought. The squashed forms of children and a family. Then again... if that was who my father really was..."

"By the way," Sasha broke the silence, remembering an important detail, that Titan—"

"Oh..." Jean interrupted, looking up to the sounds of scraping movements of hurrying wires from above, at the entrance which Connie and Sasha had unearthed.

Connie's face soon popped up afterwards as he held on by a wire from the gap in the ceiling.

"Captain, bad news!" the bald soldier yelled, "please come up here now!"

His voice reached them all clearly as Levi issued their next directions, "yeah... for now, let's work on getting out of here."

It was time to get moving again.

Eren felt truly spent already, exhaustion reaching new limits as he clutched his head in agony at everything that had happened.

Historia noticed his struggle. She just knew what was in his head instantly.

The struggle of comprehending one's father.

"I gotta say, even for you..." Levi added as he aimed his gear upwards, "... your face looks
terrible."

No-one could bring themselves to argue.

Levi shot out his anchor and propelled himself upwards with the compressed gas, leading everyone out.

Historia watched Eren get up onto his legs unsteadily while Mikasa assisted him.

He was okay… he was going to be okay now… they both were going to be… surely they would be… the worst was surely behind them now…

Historia watched Eren pass her, being supported by the Ackerman soldier.

"… Historia?" Sasha had called her name, indicating her after them and signaling her ODM gear which she would help the smaller blonde ascend with..

Historia nodded as she trailed on, passing Sasha who made a comforting and knowing smile.

Sasha was often put alongside Connie with how aloof and unfocused she could be, despite her talents as a soldier.

And the huntress had fine intuition from her long years of observation in the forest.

---

?5? of the Year 8?0

The battlefield was like so many others. Corpses mangled, blood splattered, screams crushed. Being on the losing side for so long might make it seem like it was impossible to win.

"Eren… please..." Armin begged his friend. The person whom he was the closest with, slumped down in defeat, "… wake up..."

The gap power between the Titans and humanity was immense, it was like a school of fish trying to fight back and change the direction of the vast river they lived in.

"Remember when we were kids?" said the boy to the Titan beneath him.

It was surely impossible. In no world could a group of animals, born to swim through the currents as they chose, possibly change the course of the river.

"All we could talk about was the world outside."

If only they had the power of the enemy. Another river which opposed the direction that theirs flowed. That way, they could swim through that river instead, in the direction of a changed future.

But the Titan Shifter below him had collapsed, unable to spark the creation of a new river to travel down.

He wouldn't move for the sake of humanity. His will wasn't carved out like that.

His flames did not originate from a wish for humanity.

Focusing on such a wish was what had caused hi to crumble from the start.

What sparked the flames within him was…
"Beyond the walls..."

The desire to reach the destination from whence the first river flowed.

"Tell me… honestly… even though you knew the first step beyond the walls was the difference between a warm hearth, and hell on earth. Even though you knew it meant risking your life, gambling against the possibility of dying like my parents…"

To go to where the river travels, they need to travel through a different river.

"Why? Why through caution to the wind and venture outside?!"

The direction had to be changed accurately.

"What… sort of question is that?"

Lost. Otherwise the schools of fish would become lost. They needed to avoid getting lost at all costs first.

"Because –"

*Which way did they want to go again?*

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 – At the discovered Exit of the Collapsed Cave**

"Eren," Armin called up from him, leaning over an extending a hand to him.

He was comforted instantly by the sight of his best friend looking unscathed.

Eren had been able to climb out progressively on his own yet he happily took Armin's hand.

They connected. The two hands basking in the darkness, held a glow of their own in defiance. The glow seemed to be created by itself, not a reflection of light from the glowing caverns beneath.

A unique and original shine formed by the two of them.

Equally sharing the light.

He grasped the hand offering to pull him up.

"Thank goodness," said Armin, "you're both all right?"

"Yeah..." Eren muttered in response. He turned to face his other comrades who were climbing up from the last stretch of the collapsed cavern, a struggling blonde tuft of her catching his attention.

Historia was next, walking in right behind him without Eren noticing until now. Connie was about to offer his hand to her from the surface.

"Historia, here," Eren said. He had reached down quickly catching her attention in surprise at his approach.

Connie gave him a strange look nut shrugged it off quickly before turning to Jean who had been scaling the steep incline of collapsed rocks after Historia.

The ocean blue eyes seemed to sparkle for the first time, with a bit of amusement. She nodded in
appreciation, moving around so she was vertically below him and took his hand, and emitting yet another spark before his eyes.

Eren had to reach down a little more, compensating for her short stature, They clasped their hands together, both of theirs rough and gentle at the same time.

They could feel each others warmth in contrast to the colder night air, the sense of comfort they seemed to have formed by some invisible path only being amplified.

Eren moved his arm up, easily lifting Historia's lightweight body out and towards him. No memories seemed to come at first, until Historia pulled her hand away –

---

The two boys were lounging by the river side, peacefully starring it to the book together. Both of the resting on there elbows, heads supported in their palms.

"Hey Armin…" the brunet looked up eyeing the direction which the river was flowing, "… where does the river go…"

"Oh, well that would me the ocean," the blond replied, flicking through the pages forward a little since he had guilty read ahead at home.

"It say here 'All rivers meet the sea'," he pointed to what the book said.

"All… rivers?" his friend said sceptically.

"Mhm," the blond nodded, "if you don't believe it, then we will go find the truth for ourselves!"

"Alright… we'll just follow the river downstream to the ocean…"

"Yep, we'll see the whole for ourselves!"

"Okay… we just need follow down… the same direction which the river flows…"

"That's right… the river flows downhill… so that's… south… to… the direction that… the first river flows… not any river we cause to be created…"

"Eh? What second river? There is no second river…"

"The river which you made of course!"

"… Huh? No… I didn't make that river… I… that doesn't matter! We don't need to worry about who made the river. You said to follow the first river right?"

"Yeah, the great big river."

"So, the bigger one is… this one… so that means… this… is the… first…river…"

*But already they could not tell which was which…*

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 – At the discovered Exit of the Collapsed Cave**

Things that he was certain he had already seen somewhere. Nothing new this time. Yet the
memories did not cause his whole spine to shiver any less so.

"Um, thanks Eren..." standing before his shirtless body, Historia called him again, "… Eren…?"

"...Yea… oh, sorry," realising that he was still holding her hand, already having instinctively pulled her up, he let go frantically.

Historia gave a troubled look, but hid it immediately from him.

She turned round, seeing that Connie had now pulled Jean up, and was reaching out to Sasha and the captain directly behind them.

She only then noticed how the warmth from moments ago seemed to vanish as she turned back to look over at Eren again.

"What about the Titan?" Eren had returned to Armin's side again, asking him about what should be their first concern, "what happened?"

The abnormally large Titan had clearly left the caverns somehow and ascended above ground, but surely… it should be coming after Eren himself.

"?!" Eren's body jolted, causing Historia to turn her attention to what had likewise caught his.

Vast. It was unnaturally vast and glowing in the night, extending not even half a kilometer in length, and a hundred meters in width, yet it evoked the absolute vastness of the unnatural creation.

The land in this area before them had collapsed, leaving a massive hole to the caverns below in which they were just in. The pillars, the ground that hall fallen into it, and everything in the opened up chasm was shining an incomprehensible argent.

The luminescent stone lit up the entire area, the countryside trees and sightings visible all around. The caverns were only partially uncovered, leading anyone to wonder how much they actually extended out under the land.

"..." Eren built up a cold sweat as he processed the sights around him, finding the fact that it had been night all the time, equally perplexing.

"I thought the world was coming to an end," Armin replied, recalling how simply moments prior he had been helping the section commander away from the battle, before they themselves had been about to get caught in it, "the ground broke apart, and just when it was all about to collapse… that thing came crawling out."

And...

There. In the distance, approximately one and a half kilometers away.

"?!" The massive abomination of flesh could be perceived in the distance easily. It was emitting a glow of its own, steam storming out with unmatched pressure.

The trees that it had passed were torches in comparison to the slow moving mess of meat. Straining his eyes, Eren could see the crawling bug-like posture of the enormous being dragging itself across the ground away from him.

"Is that… a Titan?" he let his doubt fall out, trying to fix the images of this thing and Rod Reiss together.
"Like none we've ever seen," Armin responded, "it's about twice the size of the colossus Titan. And it seems to be extremely hot… all the trees around it are catching fire."

The group had all gathered to examine the new threat, baring little similarity to the aforementioned Colossus Titan beyond the steaming presence it could be seen giving off in the form of a tower of smoke.

Were it not night, the great torrent could have been seen from likely around this half of the remaining human territory within Wall Rose.

It's hind legs were improperly small, and it's match more skinned down and elongated arms seemed to be doing all the dragging of the deformed mass of its torso, blown up like a slug. The belly itself was leaving a long, continuous track as its massive proportions were destroying the grassland it passed over.

"And it's ignoring nearby humans," Armin continued, turning to Eren, "us, I mean."

"…!" Eren remembered considering the same thoughts when below the cavern, as the group was trapped against the wall by this Titan itself.

"So… it's an abnormal?" Jean asked Armin.

"If it's not being controlled by the will of a former human, then yes, but..." he clarified, "what happened down there?"

Historia narrowed her eyes, looking back at what she had been the prime cause of. She had defied her father and rejected him. She had accepted Ymir's last wish and gone to free Eren.

If there was anyone with whom the blame would lie for causing such a being to appear, then…

"We're going after that Titan," Levi appeared from behind everyone, having left last after only checking the cave again, "the interior squad could be nearby. Stay on guard."

It wasn't the time for that. Historia shook the thoughts of, as she took to following the group as the captain led them back to wear the former entrance to the chapel had been.

"Eren, here," Armin called him as well, holding out an important item.

"Ah… thanks… Armin…" Eren took it.

The key to the basement.

He had entrusted it to Armin shortly before the infiltration for safekeeping.

The weight felt far greater than last he held it.

Instead of putting it around his neck, Eren decided to pocket it for now, feeling unable to look upon it.

They temporarily turned away from the direction which the Titan was heading, and began a swift march to the horses and wagons that the squad had stationed away from the now destroyed private church.

Section commander Hanji was lying there, in one of the wagons, laying on her back with her head on a cushion. The wound she had sustained in the battle had been bandaged up, but the present pain and soreness in her body was evident.
"Section commander!" Eren called as he quickly hopped in, and knelt down to Hanji, who much to relief was still conscious.

Eren also noticed an unfamiliar person at the front of the carriage. The unicorn symbol of the military police.

The bowl cut soldier seemed to be around his age, perhaps slightly older, and looking nervous yet prepared to help.

"Ah... thank goodness..." Hanji gasped out, struggling to speak properly, "good to see you're alright, but what about Historia?"

"His-" Eren immediately turned to face behind him, stepping backwards on reflex. Only to end up knocking his chest into Historia's little form once again.

"A-Ah!" the blonde let out a silent little cry as she waved her arms from getting knocked back a little and losing her balance.

Eren caught her by her back, as he leaned her in to stead her. Electricity seemed to fly through his whole body as soon as soft delicate hands touched his bare and refined chest.

Her left hand was touching directly above his heart, which felt like it stopped for a moment.

"S-sorry, Historia!" Eren moved back as soon as he could. Almost stepping on Hanji as he accidentally brushed his feet beside her.

"I-it's okay," she replied reassuringly, refusing to look at him for some reason, "just don't scare me like that..."

"Yeah, sorry Historia," Eren said again, choosing to stand awkwardly up, feeling the section commander watching the exchange.

"It's okay..." she replied once more, beginning to feel a weird stare being directed at her from somewhere aside from Eren.

"I mean... sorry... about that..." Eren trailed off once again, scratching his head slightly as he felt awkward.

The space of the wagon was small, and they were still only about a foot apart, and Eren's well endowed chest was literally exposed before her.

"I said... it's okay..." Historia stated firmly, her stomach doing a little twist as she felt the eyes of most of their comrades on them right now.

"Yeah, but... sorry..." Eren said once again, realising the circle they were going in yet unable to break it.

Historia fell silent then instead.

"..."

No-one spoke for a while, while Historia and Eren remained standing motionless before each other in a wagon with the section commander at their feet, feeling only being gazed at curiously from the corners of their comrade's eyes.

'Someone... someone please say something else...?' they both thought simultaneously.
"Well… at least you're both alright," Hanji broke the silence, "so could you both start telling as everything that happened there?"

Their prayers were answered… somewhat.

"We'll talk on the way," Levi ordered just as Eren was about to speak, bringing his horse to a stop with his reins as he quickly checked to see everyone ready, "we need to get moving now."

The group nodded, as everyone got seated and ready. The group kicked off immediately, and the wagon was sent off by the driver, following the captain's lead.

"Eren..." Historia called again just as the horses began moving. Eren looked at the black shirt she held out to him, "you'll get cold..."

Eren gaped at her odd attitude, hiding her face for some unknown reason as she held the clothing out to him. She had picked it up from the storage cart next to her, containing what seemed like civilian disguise clothing.

"Oh right, thanks Historia," he said, taking it from the hands and swiftly pulling it over himself.

Historia sighed in relief to herself as soon as he did, feeling the daggers aimed at her visually feeling less intense.

Anyone would probably get their curiosities piqued by seeing the "conversation" which Eren and Historia just had, but it wasn't difficult to guess who it was continuing staring at her even as they were moving at a higher speed.

It's not like she had been feeling up even a little of his body or anything. She was just… lost in the comfort of genuine intentions he would move reflexively with.

There was nothing, nothing more she had been doing all the while.

"We'll be following this road for now, it should be a safe distance away from that thing as we approach it," Levi shouted from the front, signaling the course they would follow for now.

Eren looked out, to the fuming smoke in the distance. Their next destination.

Then there was the sound of wood being lightly brushed over.

Historia had just scooted over to Eren, now sitting exactly to the left of him, arms touching despite the relatively large amount of room they had in the wagon.

Her face was purposefully averted, staring at the ground without any indication that she would explain the seemingly pointless reason for such a closing of distance.

Eren didn't need one. He didn't want one. The instant he saw her next to him… a feeling of peace took him.

And… he knew Historia was telling him that there were no hard feelings from the little bump between them earlier.

The action had gone unnoticed by everyone else who were right now, focusing on the round as they began to take the turn, curving left and north-westwards. They all made the turn effortlessly, only slowing down a little bit for the carriage to be curved round.

There was nothing unusual about two fellow soldier sitting side by side together. They were just 2
friends close in each other's company. Yet her presence took an unusual lingering in Eren's head.

His focus felt unnaturally taken to keep verifying that Historia was right there, sitting next to him.

Something… between them felt… so comforting, like –

"So… what exactly happened to you both since you got captured two days ago?" Hanji's voice almost caused Eren to jump unexplainably, rustling against Historia who seemed to likewise be snapped out of a daze.

"Ah, well…" Eren began his version of events.

The rattling of the wagon wheels and horse saddles accompanied the detailing of the everything which had happened, exchanged between Eren and Historia with the rest of the group's.

Without hiding anything, the two filled Hanji in on everything the pair had learnt from Rod during the succession ritual.

"Umm… so…" Hanji wished to clarify the key issue in this whole ordeal, "say we call the Titan power inside Eren as the Progenitor Titan… only those descended from the Reiss bloodline can use the true power of the Progenitor Titan."

Bump. The wagon once again dipped into a large hole on the road, causing Eren and Historia's arms to lean into each other's a bit for the 6th time in the past few minutes, neither of them thinking much of it.

"However, even if a Reiss gains its power… they'll be controlled by the first King's ideology… which won't let them free humanity from the Titans." Hanji reviewed the information again, "… Huh, that's really interesting."

Eren and Historia's faces set into identical frowns. A cursed situation regardless of the choice.

Hitch stared back at the cart, at the odd group that composed the Survey Corps. She was herself, lighting up the group's front with the lantern at her side, revealing the edges of the road.

The Survey Corps… were truly an odd bunch.

"So the first King would call this true peace?" the section commander smirked sardonically, "what a funny way to look at things."

A world in which people lived in fear, starving slowly day by day, as their age slowly seemed to come to an end, their numbers dwindling.

'\textit{That means… we still have options,}' Eren began thinking carefully. He resisted saying the words aloud on account of his recent growing objection to the line of thinking he was on, '\textit{if we let that Titan eat me… then Rod Reiss will go back to being a human… and then we will bring back a full progenitor Titan. But…}'

She was looking at him. Eren could tell. She was telling him to cast aside such thoughts. She wasn't going to let someone like him go out in such a way.

"So in other words…" Levi repeated what had been going through Eren's head, "if Rod Reiss turns back into a human and we can successfully restrain him… then undo the first King's brainwashing,
that could be a way to save humanity..."

"!!" Mikasa instantly became on guard as she rode alongside the captain, "… but that's– We can't–!!"

Historia held her breath, worrying that the captain might ask that of her new friend. Or worse, give him the order to do it.

"So, Eren… are you willing to do this?" Levi asked the dreaded question.

To sacrifice himself.

One last sacrifice to save humanity.

The sworn oath of a soldier.

There was no way a true soldier or someone who put the interests of humanity first.

"No."

"..."

A rejection.

An absolute rejection to act in the benefit of mankind.

The one who spoke defiantly was not Eren, neither Mikasa nor Armin, but Historia.

"Let's not forget that we have one other option."

Historia stood her ground with an overwhelming presence, that seemed to dwarf the starless night sky. Her words were practically commands at humanity's strongest soldier.

Telling him to back off and refusing such a question's existence.

She had seen it. The glance Eren had given her, saying that he was sorry for what he had been about to say.

Historia would not allow it. She would never allow it.

Her words were aimed more at Eren than anyone else, trying to kill the source of those sort of thoughts.

"First off… there are a lot of problems with this plan of turning Rod Reiss into the Progenitor Titan. You talk of undoing the brainwashing, but the Reiss family has apparently tried to do that for decades and failed," she began her justified argument, improvising on the spot with ease.

She waved her hands emphatically, cutting down any interruptions.

"And once he gets that power, you won't be able to restrain him if he can alter humanity's memories. We should assume that there are other factors we can't see from our position," Historia continued laying out all the points, "in fact, these circumstances could be the one hope humanity has. The Progenitor Titan has been taken away…"

"!!" Eren immediately noticed the implication Historia was making.
… from the people who would use it to propagate their ruinous ideas about peace." She emphasized, pointing to Eren.

The only person that they needed.

Historia refused to back down when the question of Eren's existence was on the line.

"Eren, that’s right… your father…” Historia turned to him, eyes devoid of any ill intent and doubts, "… was trying to save humanity from the first king."

The begging face of his father before he transformed.

"He stole the Progenitor Titan from my sister and murdered the Reiss family, including the women and children… because that was the only option he had."

Eren remembered it all.

*The key wrapped closely around his hand.*

*The injection being loaded as his father seemed to bite back tears for an unknown reason.*

"If you want to save Mikasa, Armin and the others… then you have to learn… how to control this power!"

*Boiling smoke and the remaining fractured glasses which he always wore.*

"Dad..." Eren clutched his head with one hand, pulling his knees in. He felt the key that would usually be tied around his neck in his pocket, as he pulled it out.

The burden was already so much lighter.

"That's right!" Armin added in, "there's no way anyone like Dr Jaeger would do something like that for no reason!"

"Yeah!" Mikasa joined in, "there has to be a way to save humanity without the Reiss family's blood! That's why he entrusted you with the key to the basement."

Eren and Historia shared a stare, both looking down at the key which Eren held.

"The basement? Oh… that?! So it's important?" Sasha commented, only remembering it now after all that had happened.

"? Uh, yeah..." Connie emphasized, himself remembering it at least.

"It finally looks like we can plug the hole in the wall," Jean picked up on the original topic, "I think we only have one choice."

They all continued riding together, their minds already made up.

"..." Levi confessed, unable to argue any further, "I guess things have gotten a little easier."

"I agree with that option, too," the section commander approved "but… are you sure about this, Historia?"

"Unless we have some use for it, we can't let that Titan just stroll around inside the wall. And I don't think we can restrain one of that size..." the elder women pointed over at the massive
deformation traveling through the fields as it burnt out "I'm saying… we're going to have to kill your dad."

She looked at it.

The remains of her father.

A father that she even in the end, did not know well.

A man whom she had chosen to reject, yet felt guilt for playing along with him again.

The massive being stretched out its arm once more, continuing to crawl.

An embrace first filled with warmth… only from a day ago…

"… Eren, I'm sorry," Historia instead said, directing her conversation to Eren alone, "when we were back there… I really did intend to become a Titan and kill you."

Mikasa's startled gaze flickered on. Pondering other Historia more carefully.

"… And not for humanity's sake," she confessed "it was because I wanted to think my father was right."

Her own selfish desire for a dream from long ago.

"I didn't want him to hate me..."

She hugged her knees, bringing them together as another bump in the road caused her body to knock gently against Eren,, still sitting exactly next to her.

"And on the spur of the moment when I said that I would get you out somehow… " she remembered back to that.

She had been mistaken to think Eren could be left to go free, and made an impulsive promise that she forgot instantly at the thoughts of seeing her sister again.

"I cast that aside promise like nothing… I'm sorry…" she apologized.

She caught sight of his face. Surprised but accepting.

That wasn't enough for her.

Historia was determined now.

She was going to make good on her sin and promise.

"But now… I have to say goodbye."

"IT'S NO GOOD! GET BACK!" the scout shouted, sending the message back to the rest of his comrades.

The burning heat of the massive Titan next to them was far too intense for blades to approach its skin. Artillery attacks became the next logical explanation, provided they were powerful enough to break through the nape.
"You'll be burnt to a crisp!" A second soldier warned. The small trees close to the Titan erupted in flames like torches.

The short, low nutrient filled grass meant that a fire spreading further across the commonly grazed fields was unlikely.

"Give the order to evacuate the civilians nearby" commander Erwin ordered, having been the one to lead the scouting of the malformed and exceptionally massive Titan. "Hurry!"

The behemoth extended its long arm across the fields, collapsed it down after stretching as far as it could, and then pulling its body forward.

"It's heading…" the commander read its movements ahead,"it can't be!"

"Commander Erwin!" a Survey Corps soldier suddenly rode in from the road, rushing to their leader's side, "it's squad Levi! They've successfully rescued Eren and Historia!"

"HEY, STOP!" Eren shouted at the titanized Rod Reiss.

He was standing up, still in the wagon as it continued being pulled. Hanji had similarly leaned herself up and observed from over the rail.

"Can't you hear me?! I'm talking to you, stupid!" He tried again, trying to grasp at something to antagonize him with.

The crawling Titan did not stop.

"Stop right now!" He yelled once more, careful as to where he stood as to not hit either Historia or the wounded section commander by accident, he yelled at the top of his lungs. "yeah! You, Rod Reiss! You tiny old man – "

Nothing.

Apart from Levi's darkened gaze piercing the back of Eren's face at the mention of what he was often desc

"… Ah!" Eren gasped.

The Titan was mindless.

It was not going to stop from leaving a trail of devastation as it continue to where it was heading.

"Hmm.. I don't see him reacting at all," Hanji noted from the "back when you called the Titans, did you do anything other than scream?"

"I was… at my wit's end, and..." Eren tried honking back to the encounter. The Smiling Titan. "Oh..."

He had thrown a punch at it. Instead of biting himself and transforming, he had instinctively thrown a punch and his the grinning devourer's giant palm.

"STOP, TITAN!" He shouted at it again, imitating the punch he threw. Historia watched on likewise, already having a feeling it wasn't going to be this simple.

"He's… not reacting," Hanji pointed out once again.
"Stop!" One swing after another, Eren yelled again as he tried, "stop!"

"!" Levi, who was riding his horse beside the wagon, noted the outline of a large man from up ahead on a horse.

"Levi," a familiar voice came from the approaching as he rode closer to the moving group.

"Is that you, Erwin?" the captain called, riding in conjunction with his superior. He saw the man, his bruised face mostly healed with exception of a swelling near his eyebrow.

"How is everyone?" Erwin promptly checked over them all.

"Only Hanji is hurt," Levi reported, in contrast -

"Heya, Erwin!" The section commander in question enthusiastically waving her hand happily.

"Doesn't look too bad," said Erwin.

"Commander!" Eren called greeting his superior.

"Well done, all of you," the commander nodded after seeing Eren and Historia recovered.

The whole group's attention was unspoken lay turned to the threat at hand.

"Eren's scream isn't working… I have a long list of things to tell you, but first – " Levi made his mount clott along with the commander.

"What about that Titan?" Erwin interrupted, getting immediately down to the point.

"That's Rod Reiss," the captain answered. "I think we need to ask your opinion… commander."

The other Survey Corps members joined them as they continued down the road, what few civilians that lived in the earlier had been promptly moved away.

1 hour later…

Orvud district. The northern outlier district of Wall Sina.

Even from a distance, the Titan looked massive. The pillar of smoke signaled it's approached from leagues away, yet the thing could still visibly be seen from the near horizon.

"There..." the garrison lookout on top the wall detected the first signs of the flaming giant crawling directly towards them, several kilometers away. "It's headed straight for us..."

The Survey Corps arrived, their horses being collected and led to the stables by the guards posted there. The wagon they had with them was likewise pulled up, and Hanji was first taken immediately to treatment.

A council was immediately called for to discuss the looming threat and the Survey Corps were all required to attend. All except for –

"Historia," Levi called her name as he approached the wagon. Another young garrison member, seemingly a recent recruit, was shuffling nervously behind the captain.
The girl in question had just hopped down from the wagon and seemed to almost reach out for some unknown reason to Eren who had gotten out just before her.

"This district is hardly safe right now," the captain explained, before then presenting his young follower, "but it will have to do right now. This rookie will escort you to a safe house. Stay there until the battle is over or one of us comes to evacuate away if we fail."

Levi turned away immediately ignoring the complaint Historia was about to make and leaving no room for discussion.

"Um… right this way?" the recently recruited garrison soldier hesitated, before then pointing the way into the hallway to Historia.

"Let's go, they will be starting soon," Jean gestured, turning to leave on his own, with the rest of the former 104th trainees following him, "we can at least get something to eat quickly."

Eren saw the whole squad nodding gently, evidently having not eaten recently, yet not exactly in the mood to do so either.

He followed them, subconsciously moving to pace alongside Armin. Eren looked back, scanning the surroundings for the blonde locks that took themselves in his mind with a curious interest.

She had already disappeared.

They all walked by the meeting room in the city's military headquarters which they had arrived in. The plan was not to evacuate the citizens and instead use them as bait.

It was after all, far worse to move the population to Mithras at the capitol of all the walls, for Rod Reiss would then turn his target there.

Or so someone of the Survey Corps branch was discussing. But Eren could not take any notice. His mind was at siege from far too many thoughts as it were already.

'Historia… are you really…' Eren thought, hearing the last words she said under her breath before they both fell silent on the road here.

'But now… I have to say goodbye…' Historia had said, naturally answering Hanji that she wasn't going to stand with her father. But then – '… myself…'

The muttering had only been caught on by Eren, only because he was sitting shoulder to shoulder with her.

He could have sworn she glanced at him from the corner of her eyes. As if asking him his opinion.

He hadn't answered.

Eren concluded how she was bent to be the one to kill her father.

Just like… he had had killed this…

Only this time… she was doing it with the intent of killing the mindless remains, rather than crashing the skin and bones of the planner against his will.

What was she thinking then?
Eren breathed out, turning to the door once more. He realised there was no way Historia was going to stick to wherever she was getting put.

"Eren…?!” Armin stopped, calling him out. Mikasa likewise who had been walking slightly ahead of them with Sasha stopped and looked back, "where are you going?"

Eren halted, thinking of an excuse, "Armin, tell the section commander that I'm just going to get ODM gear."

The rest of the group had already been equipped before they arrived, having spent the last couple of days on the run without changing.

The only ones who were missing gear had been Eren and Historia.

Armin nodded wordlessly, seemingly accepting the logical reason, as he watched his hurrying back.

Mikasa furrowed her eyebrows slightly but nonetheless continued alongside Armin down their original direction.

It was fine. Eren was surely fine, only plagued by the looming battle. He seemed weaker than usual, but that surely just because he was tired.

He was… surely just the same as in the past…

Eren had quickly asked a senior officer to point him the direction to the storehouse, which was attached just through the wing nearby.

He slid his shoes, rotating the direction his feet were facing as he stood by the doors.

Eren hadn't seen the shoulder length blonde hair nor the small yet pure delicate white cloth she had been wearing for the ritual, while he had been traversing around.

He opened the wooden doors to the store room, looking inside carefully.

It was completely empty. There was no signs of Historia at all in the room as Eren walked in.

He steadily moved deeper inside, searching all over the shelves for anyone's presence.

Nobody.

Eren let out breath that he didn't realise he was holding as he moved along to search for an average body's gear, since he would require one after all.

Had he been wrong? Was Historia not going to bother with ODM gear. The thought seemed ridiculous, of course she would turn up here. Unless –

The door was creaked open once again, as Eren instinctively shuffled to hide behind a shelf for some reason, like a kid about to be caught by his mother for looking at stuff he wasn't supposed to.

Eren peeked over, trying to see who entered. The person had already moved inside. He didn't see who it was but heard the soft padding footsteps that he knew belonged to hers.

Eren took quieter steps forward, sneaking around to the side of another shelving unit behind which her feet were tapping.
"AH!" Historia yelped again as Eren appeared before her, causing them both to stumble uncertainly backwards, "I said to not scare me like that! What are you doing here?"

"Sorry! I just… needed gear as well," Eren looked at her slightly nervous expression. She had evidently sneaked out somehow and likely immediately to come here. She had also already changed out of her white robes quickly and as wearing a more typical plain shirt and trousers. "Historia… are you really sure…"

She blinked and responded easily. "Yes."

Eren looked down, wishing to doubt her for such a thing. Trying to find a reason to, he asked "… why?"

She looked down, and then over her shoulder and all around the room, realising for the first timer that it was just the two of them.

"Because… it's my fault, and I'm going to make it up to everyone for getting dragged into what I caused…" Historia looked down remembering the cave below. "I'm sorry for… for everything back then…"

"Huh?" Eren lowered his mouth slightly. She had already apologized after all.

"For… for just…" Historia tried to form the words she actually wanted to say unsuccessfully, "… for… just… jumping to conclusions… and…"

"… No… it's not your fault for jumping to conclusions of anything," Eren frowned, trying to reassure her as he felt the key still in his pocket. He pulled it out in front of him, the rope curled around it as he held it up for himself, "what… what he did… after just finding out you had someone there for you… finding out who killed her so soon…"

Eren had seen it. Perhaps only fragments but far too many of them. The elder sister crossing the boundary to see the precious and weeping child always happy to see her… to see the one person who cared for her.

The person who was wiped out half a decade before she learnt of it.

"You're father didn't do it with no reason," Historia said and pressed on, "but more importantly… you're not your father. And I'm not… mine."

"… But…" Eren struggled, Historia past ill intent against him expelled.

There was simply nothing he could see in her when she pierced through his eyes, searching for the teeth of his father within him.

Eren clucked his tongue against the back of his teeth.

"And that's why…" she trailed on, looking at him, "… I will be the one to deal the last blow."

She made the oath to cut the final blood tie.

Eren and Historia were walking side by side. After she made the promise, Eren could do nothing to question her further. He simply couldn't do it.

Historia had then gone and quickly started strapping on the belts to her ODM gear, while Eren
watched slowly, turning to his and doing much the same.

His thoughts went from being clouded with conflicts to being empty with uncertainty. He was struggling to think up anything to say right then. So he didn't.

They walked silently to the meeting room, standing before the large doors as they confirmed the voice of commander Erwin explaining the plan.

Eren put his arm at the door handle and stopped. Historia was just next to him, staring patiently.

"Eren," she called him again, "… my father was the one who tried pushing a burden onto me because he wanted to manipulate me… right?"

"… Well..." Eren didn't know what to answer. Yes? Maybe?

"If your father truly wished to just use you…" Historia continued, "… he could have forced you to do a task you didn't want you to do… but instead he gave you the power immediately… so… I don't think you should hold any contempt at that key he gave you."

The Basement.

Eren's father, Grisha had promised his son that he would find the truth there.

Eren struggled, pulling his hand away from the door and pulling out the key he had stuffed back into his pocket.

A heavy and cold metal, just like it always was. Yet… it felt at least lighter than it had earlier…

"…" Historia observed it as well. She had seen him just pull it out from under his shirt and just stare at it.

The reason why Frieda, her half sister, the only person who had been there, wishing her blessings, existing to prove that she hadn't been unwanted like she thought, was killed…

"… You should keep hold of it carefully, right?" Historia clarified, "so… long as its not too heavy… you can go there… and find out why…"

Eren continued facing her perplexed, before nodding gently.

The answer to the question why Frieda had been killed rested with him. Historia would be lying if she said she didn't want to find out desperately why.

But… she also wanted Eren to stop that painful expression…

She told him to wear it around his neck and hold onto some hope that his father was not like her own.

He did.

The garrison commander seemed to calming down, seemingly having just been livid over something, seemingly having a rare argument with commander Erwin of all people, who himself remained completely collected.

"I guess… we have no choice," the middle aged man complied,
At that moment, Eren pulled the doors to the room as quietly as he could. The meeting seemed to be practically over.

He quietly walked over to stand with the rest of his group, in between Armin and Mikasa but seemingly leaving a small gap in between both as well.

He attracted a few stares however they all turned back to the commander as he explained again. Armin nodded a wordless gesture which Eren returned as they stood next to each other. And then –

Historia popped, as if out of thin air. She had been moving right at the back of Eren, the Titan shifter being key to any operation naturally being the most attracted to, and with her small frame she had remained unnoticed by everyone.

She popped in as if out of nowhere, and then…

Took the gap exactly next to Eren's right, in the spot between Eren and Mikasa.

The Ackerman blinked in surprise. Her focus being on Eren, she had not once noticed Historia herself.

The gap between her and the one who gave her the scarf she always wore, had seemingly be filled up with the appearance of the now unrecognizable blonde girl.

No, she had been unrecognizable the first time, 2 weeks ago. Yet now the little blonde girl looked yet another world apart.

Mikasa decided that she didn't like it.

"This Titan is bigger than anything we've seen before, but that means it's also a big, slow target," Erwin assured the garrison regiment, along with everybody else, "the cannons mounted on top of the wall should be extremely effective against it, but… if somehow that still doesn't defeat it..."

Erwin turned to Eren, signaling the late arrival out as he stood next to the one person who should have been resent in safe quarters.

"We will have to make full use of the power of the Survey Corps," the commander assured.

The attention was all absolutely on Eren.

Everyone's eyes bore onto him, the pressure reminding him of the burden he had to shoulder. The burden which he had missed his chance to escape from – or at least been denied it by Historia.

Nothing had changed.

He was still the one who was playing the role as the hope of humanity.

Historia tentatively tried to reach out, with her own hand and try to hold Eren's dangling right hand. She reaches halfway, before pulling back.

No-one had taken notice of it,

She tried again.

But the crowd was dispersing, and people were moving all around now, some trying to move past her, seemingly noticing the presence of the Queen-to-be and being none too comfortable about her appearance here.
Surely she could still… no… she'll tell him later…

She cursed herself lightly for not taking the chance when they were alone, but decided it wasn't the right occasion for it either.

She would tell him later… because… there had to always be a 'later'…

---

**Early Fall of the year 850 - At Dawn of That Same Day**

The sunrise arrived only an hour later.

The east facing side of the wall of the northern Orvud district, was manned fully with cannons and garrison soldiers. Almost a thousand men were up there and ready.

Historia walked up after ascending onto the wall on her own, when she knew the time was near. She saw her comrades in her squad, grouped up together and seemingly discussing various serious topics.

She walked towards them, instantly grabbing their attentions at the certainty behind every stride. They were naturally exhausted and unhappy at their new enemy, her father.

"Historia… that equipment you're wearing… wait, you can't be here!" Jean tried to pressure her, while Eren looked on, knowing Jean of all people wasn't enough for her to even worry herself.

Eren was more concerned right now about -

"Hey," captain Levi walked over to the rest of his squad after looking over the preparations, "he's right."

Historia seemed to sweat a little, prepared to match her steel against the same person who had easily demonstrated the futility of any struggle against.

"You can't take part in this battle," humanity's strongest soldier gave her an unimpressed yet light glare, "I thought I ordered you to wait in a safe place. What are you thinking?"

Historia did not buckle nor stutter one bit this time.

"I'm here for a showdown with my own fate."

Historia made her declaration.

"… Huh?" Levi responded, unexpecting her to be so resolute in any form before him given their last encounter.

"Captain Levi. You're the one who told me…" she began explaining, "...I needed to choose whether to run or fight."

"…” The former members of the 104th all held their breaths.

The powerful soldier grimaced, caught up by having his own orders used against him. "Agh, damn it. There's no time for this…"

Levi turned the discussion away.
The massive target entered into range.

"It's coming," he said, proceeding to address the Orvud garrison commander once more.

Historia was not refused. The former trainees all proceeded as a group to their assigned lookout post, Historia following behind.

The battle started almost instantly after.

"FIREEE!" The Orvud district head officer waved his arm down, signalling the start as she shouted.

The resounding cannon fire of 228 cannons exploded out, both from on top of the wall and from below, as all the garrison soldier cupped their ears to stop the ringing of the blast.

The explosive shells were fired, about a quarter of them missing the target and hitting the grasslands around it, while about half struck at the nape and head region, while the remaining quarter struck different parts of the Titan's body in a collective bombardment.

Levi soon wandered over to join them, with commander Erwin also showing up. They all stood nervously, the group all awaiting to see the result once the smoke cleared.

The cannons in the meantime were already being reloaded, having anticipated the need for further attacks.

"..." Eren wordlessly awaited, directly behind Historia whom he saw had not a single sign of wavering.

"How'd he like that?" Erwin commented.

The whole regiment all stood in anticipation while they proceeded about their job.

The soldiers on the ground, directly in front of the wall sweated uncomfortably, being in the direct line of sight of their target,

A target which they had never had experience of fighting. They had hardly heard the tales in such a spot within the walls, never once seeing the true appearance of Titans.

The ground shook, the massive abnormal having thrown out his arm forward again, resuming its task of moving forward despite the massive wholes left in its head and throughout its entire body.

It regenerated slowly, but the attack had not been deep enough.

"Ngh..." The ground soldiers began to panic at the sight.

"FIREEE!" One of the groups issued their order on their own, without waiting for support from above the wall as they were subject to the horrifying vitality of this being.

"The ground cannons seem to have even less of an effect," Erwin summed up, the Survey Corps members having witnessed the undelayable threat approaching once more.

"Of course..." Levi explained, "the cannons on the wall have a much better angle, and they didn't do shit. What's going on?"

The commander began walking off, followed by captain Levi as they continued discussing the issue of the battle. Troops, weapons, command structure. All of it was far from ideal.
Eren stood watching at the approaching giant bug-like shape.

The next enemy which he now would undoubtedly have to face.

The father of the girl who stood right in front of him just to his right, no more than a foot away.

What kind of expression was she making now? He couldn't see her face at all, yet her presence gave off the impression that she was completely calm and collected.

But was that really true?

"Erwin! I brought it!" Everyone turned their attention to Hanji's approaching form, her arm now tied in a sling as she enthusiastically run over, followed by several Survey Corps members rolling a barrel tied into a small freight wagon, and carrying ropes, nets and gunpowder barrels. "All the gunpowder I could get, ropes, and a net. We still need to put it together."

The former 104th trainees all turned to her as she approached, preparing to begin the plan that they had reserved to fight against this Titan.

Historia turned her head instantly, intending to follow everyone else who was moving to join Hanji. She halted, noticing Eren staring at her curiously.

He saw her face clearly.

It wasn't just how determined she was. It was as if she was fighting back the emptiness she had temporary returned to once he had left his hardened Titan form.

The loneliness which he had seen 2 weeks ago, was all gone.

No… it wasn't. She was just hiding it. Behind another mask.

Eren knew it.

The instant he looked, he knew it.

He could tell so many things just by looking at her eyes.

She was… so easy for him see through… just like she'd always been...

"Eren… let's get going," Historia began, taking another step forward to Hanji's group before stopping and looking back at him again.

Jean, Sasha and Connie had already began following Hanji's instructions after they sprinted off immediately. Armin and Mikasa had followed quickly after them, beginning the preparations in the short amount of time they had left.

The only ones who were still left at the outcropping buttress, from which they had been overlooking the cannon attack, were Eren and Historia.

"Eren… " Historia faced him fully, likewise able to see through his eyes.

… It wasn't just Eren that could see through Historia the moment he looked into her eyes…

She breathed in and out silently, and faced him again with a stern expression, "… you're wrong, if you think that –"
"Hey! You two, get over here and help us, would you?" Hanji noticed them at last, calling them over before she turned again to gesturing about the barrel-and-wagon device to Armin.

Historia jumped slightly, "U-understood, section commander!"

"A-ah, His… right," replied Eren weakly, immediately beginning his strides after her, casting aside the question of what she was about to say.

He honestly felt like he didn't need to hear what she would have said.

Because the cogwheels of his head were already turning once more, bringing his bearings back.

Every time, so it seemed.

Every time they looked in each other's eyes, there was something causing an anomalous force burning within him.

A fire that would flicker off and on in the wind, relighted by the burning gazes of two orbs crossing once more.

Historia stooped down near to where one end of the net was laid out, a long pile of rope needing to be sorted and tied back.

Eren knelt down to another pile of rope as well, smaller than the one Historia was at, one to strip all the barrels together and prevent them from falling out too much.

He picked up one end of the rope in his hands. Stretching it out, he looped it round his elbow and arm, before pulling it tightly to prevent it from falling apart. What was he supposed to do with this?

Eren glanced over to Historia who was just stretching out another length, and looping another bit around her elbow.

"How to make this…? Well..." Hanji tried to explain, after she walked over to where the workings of the ammunition was being collected, "try to imagine we're wrapping up a nice gift for someone special."

Flop. The rope he had been trying to wind up slipped off his elbow, becoming messed up again.

'Dammit,' Eren thought, 'stupid wind messing it up...'

The breeze right now was hardly strong enough to make even bits of his hair to wobble, though there was a feeling in the air that it would pick up soon.

Erwin, who had just sent off Levi along with a trio of their comrades to the other end, appeared behind the small blonde working diligently.

"If I may… Historia… in the event we survive this..." the commander spoke, getting her attention, along with Eren who looked up, "... you're going to be the queen who rules the world inside the walls. Naturally, it's a problem for you to be on the front lines like this."

Armin, who was realigning a barrel nearby, glanced from just past Eren. The commander had naturally raised one of the biggest concerns.

Historia had ignored her orders to stay behind and away from the battle, taken her gear up without authorization and managed to avoid captain Levi's refutation.

Now however, the commander was standing before her, the person who had issued this order from
the start.

But the only person whom Historia needed to convince.

"I have a question for you," she stood her ground. She didn't say it disrespectfully, only as a challenge to the experienced soldier, "do you think the people are so naive they'd obey a ruler in name only?"

Historia had never spoken directly to the man before, and though she had been given the impression of his tenacity on several occasions, she also knew the man was very reasonable.

"..." Erwin wordlessly answered her rhetoric.

"I have my own thoughts on that," Historia explained, setting aside the robe carefully as she rose to face the man determinedly, "I've assigned myself a mission I have to carry out."

To cut the ties of the last person to whom she was connected by blood.

To cut the ties of an old dream that was just weighing her down now.

– "That's why I'm here now."

"FIRE!" The command was shouted from across the wall once again.

The reloaded cannons exploded in response, digging deeper holes into the fast approaching target crawling closer before them.

It did not stop the Titan.

Nor did it faze either the commander nor the girl who was standing up for herself and questioning him.

Nor did it register within Eren as he watched that scene.

He stared in wonder, the little girl standing her ground and refusing to budge.

Eren released his breath, just as his hair rustled from a brief wind that traversed across the top of the wall with a gentle whooshing tune.

'Historia...’ he thought as he looked at her once more, ‘you've become so strong...’

Dwelling back into his memories, he remembered all the things he would associate with her.

Whether it was Krista or the empty eyed Historia, far different from this one.

Fragile. Feeble. And Frail.

'I thought that you were weak, but…’

Unable to hold her ground. Unable to hold herself.

’… It was the other way around.’

Always knowing what to do, no matter how tough it got.

Letting others prey on you, instead of fighting back.
Being used by others.

'I was the weak one...'

Eren gazed down.

Into the memory of the one whose name was written upon the tombstone.

'Somewhere along the line, I started to think that I was special...'

Laying down the flowers onto yet another grave.

Then another and another.

In another graveyard.

The names were far too many to be remembered.

'That's why I accepted it as being "unavoidable" when other soldiers died for my sake...'

Choosing to sacrifice themselves for him.

Whether he had faith in their power or not, the mangled and torn apart body pieces would keep dropping from the mouths of Titans.

'It's the same way with my Titan powers... I hated the Titans so much, but I accepted a Titan body as my own without a second thought...'

Entrusting everything to the power he had.

A power which didn't belong to him.

A power which he didn't earn or pay the price for.

'And it was because I thought that its power was my own... that's truly how a weak person thinks...'

The rope in his hands fell, bringing him back to reality. The pieces hadn't messed themselves up together this time, however they would need to be re-wrapped again.

He began carefully, slowly lift the ends up once more, beginning the loops a third time.

'What should I do?' He thought.

Not to the present which was already pre-determined from last night.

But to the future.

'Sure, maybe now I can plug the hole in the wall...'

His mind was not on the train of thought of 'it would be better if I had never been born', however...

'Does that mean I can save humanity? Me, an average, nobody?'

And then what?

Even if he worked out some way to accomplish a feat like that.
What was going to happen then…

What was it… that he wanted to do…

'And it's humanity as a whole that's the unluckiest of all…'

His mind turned down, looking below to the city in the midst of the evacuation drill.

"… For having someone like me as its secret weapon…" Eren concluded. The wind whooshed past him again, just as he turned his eyes to several specks in the city below.

Three children. Two boys, one girl.

One of them pointing his finger upwards, towards the loud cannon sounds which must have caught his attention.

"Wait..." he muttered beneath his breath, "that kid..."

Light brown hair combed to the sides.

Trying to prove himself by bravely leading his two friends over there while ignoring the drill.

---

I year ago…

Late Spring of the Year 849 – Orvud District: Morning of the 4th Day after Departure

Eren's hand was curled in a first, about to knock onto the door of the female barracks.

He didn't know what he was going to say to her. Why was it that Krista just had to always be… like that?

She made things so difficult for Eren to deal with when everyone else seemed ignorant of her stupid act.

Eren sighed again for umpteenth time that morning. He readied himself and just decided to get on with it.

He raked against the door twice, then thrice.

"Yes, come on in!" Eren heard the chirpy voice, active with happiness again, much to his distaste. He pulled the door to the small room Krista had been given in the medical wing open.

The cheerful atmosphere practically shattered immediately after.

"Oh... um... morning Eren..." Krista said from where she was by a small desk with her ODM gear, covered with bandages over several places.

The bruises had apparently been very severe in several places, and one of her hands was in a sling since it stressed her shoulder far too much, the spot where she had first been hit by one of the rocks.

"Morning... you're supposed to be in bed," Eren walked in and commented, displeased to see that Krista seemed to be checking her ODM gear as per the maintenance procedures.

'Who does she think she'll fool into thinking she can use it in such a state?’ Eren thought, choosing
to bite back his tongue. Reiner was right after all. There was absolutely no excuse for bad blood between them.

Eren didn't have to like her, but he needed to at least be able to work with her.

"Um... Eren listen," Krista stood up and walked closer to Eren cautiously, as if scared he would lash out at her, "could you please... re-consider... I know what you said might be true... but please don't leave me behind here... I can -"

"One reason," Eren interrupted her.

"... Eh?" Krista cocked her head uncertainly.

"Give me... one genuine reason why you are so persistent and continuing on with this mission," Eren requested of her, staring at her dead serious.

She was hurt. She was hurt because she let herself be hurt. And she was just going to hurt herself some more.

What did this fake girl before him truly want?

"Well, I w-" Krista had began, giving a lot of thought into her response.

But this time, the door had been opened again, leading to the delicately lit, simple room that Krista was staying in.

"Ah, miss! " I brought the..." a boy had rushed in through the door, carrying something large carefully in his hands, coming to a halt, as he recognized the visitor, "ah! It's you soldier Eren! Who'd have thought we'd see each other so soon!"

"Oh, hey Ludvig," Eren remembered the name of the boy who he had helped from getting beaten in the streets just this morning, "what are you doing here?"

"Ah, my aunt works here as a nurse, so I'm just running errands for her like I usually do from morning till noon," the young boy replied, turning to Krista straight after and giving her an oddly wrapped package that seemed to weigh a lot on his shoulders, "and here you go miss!"

Krista gratuitously thanked the boy with a typical beaming smile that went to the boy's head a little.

"Goodbye then! I'll leave you two to get some private time," the boy cheekily gave an odd smirk before disappearing down the corridor. The implication however went over Eren and Krista's heads however.

"Hey, Krista, what was it that you got that kid to do?" Eren returned, now the two of them alone in the room all of a sudden feeling a lot less tense. He inspected he hastily covered package which Krista moved over to the desk.

"Oh, well... I guess I'll show you now and... I guess it's related to the reason why I want to continue along with this examination..." Krista trailed on, becoming all the more uncomfortable as she tried to think of what to say to convince him.

It didn't hurt to let the truth come out now and then, right?

"Alright... tell me," Eren urged.
Like the boy who he met on one morning, telling him to fight and fight.

The will to fight.

Krista gave Eren and odd response, seemingly failing in logic at first glance…

But it was quite similar to something he understood.

Having the will to fight was just a step towards progress.

Eren wasn’t going to stay as someone who people pass off as ‘weak’ ever again.

Similarly –

"I… want to prove to myself that I can hurt myself for the benefit of others ..."

---

Early Fall of the Year 850

"Hey..." Eren said, calling over to his best friend working behind him.

"Hm?" Armin hummed a response, just as he finished tying the knot around the second layer of barrels.

"The kids in this town... they are..." Eren remembered back to that day, always able to recall it more vividly than anything, "... just like we were on that day..."

"... Yeah..." Armin stopped and glanced over, down to wear Eren had caught sight of the three children, "if they think there's no way that a Titan bigger than that Wall is going to attack them today... then they're probably going to see the exact same thing we saw on that day."

A Titan of impossible proportions, bringing the beginning of the end to their world.

An unbeatable god-like monster in a world with not a single hero.

The only ones who could ever endeavor against such overwhelming odds...

"But... unlike that day, there are soldiers on top of the Wall who can fight back," Armin underlined the key difference from that day, "and we are those soldiers."

Eren's eyes felt it again. A different feeling this time. But a power bubbling inside him.

Armin gripped the ropes tightly, and pulled them with all his might together.

True strength. Never backing down, always trying his hardest.

It was undeniable to Eren.

How could he ever possibly call such people weak?

"Yeah, let's stack them three high," Hanji's voice made Eren turn her direction. Mikasa walked past the section commander, carrying another barrel all by herself, something which would usually have taken 2 or 3 men to accomplish.

She moved steadily and placed down the barrel carefully to wear the section commander was pointing.
Her eyes were steady and determined, holding some compressed light in them.

Just like that day, when the Smiling Titan had come. Mikasa had tried to lift the collapsed remains of the houses.

But she had failed.

And so had he.

"Eren?" Mikasa said, "there's no time to be standing around. Your hands need to be moving."

Her face was resolute, unwilling to fail again this time.

While Eren himself…

He dropped the rope which Mikasa had reminded him to keep working on.

Eren looked around again. It wasn't just them now. It was everyone.

He looked back, to Historia, still unmoving her feet as the commander turned to away, seemingly mumbling over several thoughts.

Everyone here was pulling their worth, wishing to mark yet another change from that day.

Their enemy was known. Their strategy was prepared. Their weapons were out and ready.

But if the foundations of its centre piece was not working… then everything…

Nothing would change.

...

Eren grit his teeth hard.

He curled his right hand into a fist, and smashed it into his own face.

"Huh?!!" Armin gasped out. His friend had just punched himself out of nowhere.

Eren stumbled, head disorientated as he readied his left hand into a fist and punched himself in the face again, causing blood to shoot out from his partially broken nose.

"Hey!" Mikasa strode over swiftly, reaching out on reflex, and gripping both of his hands away from his face "Eren?!!"

"Did you hurt yourself?" Armin popped in, "it's not time for that yet."

"No… I just wanted to beat the hell out of a useless, pathetic brat… that's all," Eren snarled, blood trickling from his nose a little, "I hope I finished him off..."

Pushing aside his past self, he got ready for the battle.

Pushing it aside, so that he can change the course of the battle this time away from a one sided massacre.

"FIRE!" A final volley of cannonfire hit the Titan now directly below the wall, almost simultaneously.
This time, the being trembled from the direct impact, many of the guns hitting the flesh just above its name, yet unable to fully pierce it.

The smoke of the burnt gunpowder began to collect, along with steam from the damage and the Titan itself thickened.

"All right!" The Orvud garrison commander cheered, "the flesh of its nape is exposed! We'll finish it off with the next round! Hurry and reload!"

The cannon were pulled open, the smoke being cleared out as the final set of explosive shells was being brought forward into it.

"Hm?!" The middle aged soldier who was commanding the garrison forces was directly above the Titan itself, some 35 meters below him. Suddenly the behemoth erupted, hot waves of steam shooting upwards, hitting the man first.

"Ah, hot!" Connie complained, covering himself as the steam reached him on his side of the wall.

"Damn it. This is bad," Levi summed up everyone's thoughts. The steam was traveling everywhere on top of the wall now, blinding every one of the soldiers close to it, "the wind changed direction."

Their group consisting of the captain, Jean, Connie and Sasha, had moved up along the side of the wall, so that they would be positioned to the right of the goliath as it faced the wall.

The rest of the Survey Corps who had remained, ready to start the operation had stayed to the left of the enormous Titan.

And then Eren himself, had been stationed even further back, at a safe distance away from everyone else.

The steam had encompassed the rest of his group as well, though he could just vaguely see the outline of the tall commander who was observing as much as he could from the side, but making sure that Eren could still see him, so that he could be given the signal.

Everyone else, including Armin and Mikasa, had all been hidden by the dense steam.

'We're going to do it,' Eren thought, offering a silent wish for their safety, 'we'll… we'll stop that day from repeating this time…'

Eren couldn't see anything what was going on.

He couldn't see anyone in all the mess.

He could only make out the shouts of panic and struggles before another volley of cannons was fired.

But he knew that they were alright…

It was different from that day.

It was different from the first day of Trost as he fell to his first battle.

The strength he thought with back then was completely different to the strength he flung himself in with back then.

It was the strength… Historia had awakened within him…
Perhaps she wasn't the only one who had such an effect on him… but… if he had to honestly say…
the one person who had been the prime cause of this…

'Yeah… it was you in the end who picked me back up from zero… Historia...'

He still hadn't thanked her… for anything…

She was engraved at the front of his mind, for the past several hours… she had been lingering in
his mind for the past couple weeks…

It was… odd when he just thought about her…

Odd in so many ways, like he had found her and himself recently.

She was so strong, able to survive, even if distorted all this while.

He couldn't even feel worried for her in the back of his mind, unlike what he felt for Mikasa and
Armin right now. There was no way in which she could be defeated by something like this.

Historia. She was frankly, the one and only one who held the reins to everything happening this
moment.

Historia.

Surely she –

The wall trembled. The entirety of it, just crushed, causing Eren himself to wobble on his feet.

He cursed under his breath, wishing to know where the impact had come from.

He wanted to hazard a look to the right edge of the wall, to see what the Titan was doing. But Eren
didn't. He stuck his ground firmly to the position he had been told to await.

Instead, he looked left, down to the city inside the walls. The three children had stopped on the road
which he had seen them on earlier, all of them having felt the impact.

And then –

A massive arm flew all the way above the wall, bursting through the steam, and stretching up
straight to the sky.

It then fell, bending itself as it cut through the smoke and crushed down, gripping the top of the
wall.

The Titan rose.

Towering at over 120 meters without being able to stretch it's hind legs. It supported itself on the
wall as it looked down onto the city.

Just like 5 years ago…

The same feeling as 5 years ago.

It's body lifted vertically, the insides of its body visible after having dragged its body across the
ground for several kilometers.
It's face was eroded down into its inner structure, blood leaking down in gallons from its empty eyelids bursting in heat along with some brain matter oozing out.

It's nonfunctional organs, beginning with its lungs and intestines fell out, gravity taking effect, as the massive proportioned innards collapsed downwards to the top of the wall.

Soldiers directly below it run away, some jumping off the wall and falling. Most of them managed to put their ODM gear into effect and escaping the falling organs which crushed in a bloody mess, covering the wall, and sliding down after painting it with a layer of blood.

Panic broke out immediately, the civilians in the evacuation drill scrambling away immediately, along with the garrison soldiers who were trying to flee from the battle.

Screams mixed with screams, in yet another city of the humans behind the walls.

Eren could hardly listen to it all. He had a role to play. One in which, if successful, would save people from the screams of memories of their future.

There.

Commander Erwin had waved up, and arcing downwards to 90 degrees.

Eren breathed out, and bit down hard against his palm once again.

The same way in which Historia's sister, Freida had done.

The flash of light and striking thunder signaled his transformation, this time, no different than usual.

The three kids in the city below skidded to a halt at the new appearance.

"?! Is that…" the brown haired boy spoke, looking up to the wall again along with everyone else "a Titan?"

The transformation smoke vapourised into the air as Eren got his feet carefully placed on top of the wall.

His Titan hand grabbed along the netting tied up. Before him, Mikasa splashed herself with a bucket of cold water as Armin gripped the handles of the freight wagon on one side.

"Ready on your command!" Armin shouted to the commander. On the other side, Sasha stood prepared, similarly gripping her own set, ready to release the levers.

The commander saw the hand wave from the other side just as the steam traveled upwards from the abnormally giant Titan, the so-called Titan form of Rod Reiss.

Erwin lifted the smoke signal gun, aiming it upwards so that it would certain be seen by all parties.

"Now!" he yelled, firing the trigger as the coloured fume soared, "commence the attack!"

Armin and Sasha pulled simultaneously on the triggers, launching both pairs of anchors from their respective machinery sets.

The carefully aimed wires immediately flew and stuck themselves into their large targets – both
outsides of Rod Reiss's left and right Titan hands.

"Go!" Armin shouted after it, watching the gas shoot out naturally as it propelled the loaded barrel within the wagon forward, towards the hands on a steady path.

They both hit at the same time, igniting upon impact on both sides from the overwhelming heat.

The gunpowder exploded, blowing up the outer muscles of both of the massive Titan's hands, as it roared deeply in agony, echoing all across the city.

"All right!" Armin cried, seeing through the steam as he saw the behemoth wall off its arms crushing the walls surface, "it's off balance!"

Its face crushed onto the wall, shaking it once poor and creating another unchangeable dent into it, followed by cracks this time.

If it fell again, a crack of the walls might fall out, awakening yet another threat which dwelled within. However –

"Eren!" Erwin commanded, sending the Titan shifter off, as he swung the collected bag of explosives onto his back before leaping forward on top of the wall, towards the mouth of the monstrosity.

His jaw stretching as he pulled himself off at his top speed without becoming dangerously close to falling. Driving his whole body forward as he cried soundlessly within, covering a dangerous distance at a remarkably high speed.

The weight of the gunpowder barrels was nothing compared to the weight of a boulder on his back.

All based on the gamble, that it had a mouth.

It faced the Titan shifter as he came forward, noticing, sensing his presence without even needing eyes.

A mouth, large and completely hanging open after having been dragged across the ground. As predicted.

'Jackpot.' Eren stated to himself. He leaned forward, taking a swing back with the explosives ready to be lit up from the intense pressure within its throat.

Eren flung the barrels straight into the larger Titan's mouth.

Eren watched them, holding his breath. They fell in, straight off towards the end of the Titans mouth.

A fraction of a second felt too long, wishing for them to ignite instantly.

The first of the barrels seemed to fall, disappearing down the throat.

And then the explosion came. All the barrels exploded, causing a chain reaction.

Gasping slightly inside his Titans nape, Eren quickly moved to cover his Titan's face with his hands instinctively, hiding away from the blinding light.

It exploded. The face of Rod Reiss's Titan completely exploded from within.
The piece of its nape, mixed in with various other pieces of its flesh that weren't incinerated by the
detonation, were shot outwards at a low angle, vast majority of it, choosing to fall down onto the
other side of the wall, towards the city.

The command was given for the troops to engage their ODM gears, and sever the last connecting
piece of the surviving nape that would have flown off on its own.

But the Titan shifter had played his part already.

The rest was to be left to the soldiers.

Eren faced off against the flames encroaching on him.

He hardened his Titan skin once more, though only the front of his body.

It was truly exhausting, covering such a wide area, just focusing and willing it to strengthen.

But this was the last bit of strength he had to spend this time. Survive the blast by shielding himself
from an impact dangerously close from the wall.

Falling off would damage him severely though very unlikely to be life threatening, however the
bigger problem was crushing onto any civilians or their property.

Eren's head turned right round and peeled through the exploded cloud. The lunks of flesh that had
remained intact had taken a sharp dip downwards and falling at fast rates which his comrades
attached themselves after.

An extremely dangerous task. You couldn't simply soar through the sky and latch onto the falling
pieces of flesh with ease.

It was different from hooking your wires, and building momentum for the best way to fly through
the sky.

What this required was careful aiming… for someone who had a good balance on their ODM gear,
and did not focus on speed and soaring power.

A weak point, that's 1 meter long and 10 centimeters wide.

Eren scanned the area, noticing captain Levi having little difficulties in aiming his anchors
properly. Mikasa likewise seemed to show no fear, yet still moved much slower than usual,
partially unaccustomed to such a task.

He saw Jean and Connie as well. The two of them, having a much more difficult time in staying
afloat in the air. Once they fell to far down, they would naturally still be able to latch onto the wall
or houses in the city, however depending on the distance, it could prove troublesome.

And there –

He saw her. Historia had just swooped around from behind Jean, flying gracefully in the air. She
looked to be having no trouble with balancing, and seemed completely one with the wind.

Historia struck her anchors into a relatively large chunk. She knew that it was this piece, the one in
which the nape had been condensed into, a control sector.

Too far. Eren tried to turn his heel right round, struggling to turn his Titan body facing towards the
walled city after having hardened significant portions of it. Historia was flying too far away from
the walls.

His Titan wasn't responding well enough. But he still had his ODM gear.

Eren pulled himself right out of his Titan form's nape at once. The rush to get out was unhindered by the usual grips of the Titan flesh which merged with him the longer he was in his Titan form.

His legs kicked off instantly as he pulled out the handles of the ODM gear, pressing the trigger to propel himself out with gas, not needing to fire his anchors as he predicted the line of the dive he would take.

Historia had closed in on her own target, the remaining piece of her father.

The water splashed over her body still clung to her face, the water particles evaporating as her blades reached forwards in the dual horizontal slash.

She heard Jean call her name, concerned for her appearance in the battle, as everyone was.

_The commander before her did not immediately jump to agree with her idea._

"I understand your feelings... but I cannot allow you to fight," Erwin said as he frowned.

"Commander, please!" she had pleaded, "I've finally found the purpose I was meant to fulfill! That's why I'm here right now!"

She begged for the commander to nod in allowance. Erwin sighed, turning to his side as he pondered on it. And then –

"Well in any case," he mumbled, "I doubt there'd be any way for me to stop you, considering this body of mine..."

_Historia opened her mouth in surprise._

_It wasn't approval._

_However, it was what she needed._

'I'm sorry for being so selfish,' Historia thought, opening her eyes again, as she threw her weight into the blades, balancing her body properly as she closed in, _but... this is the first time... that I've ever... had a fight with my father._'

The blades connected, searing through the bone and the contents inside.

A metal vibrating sound, as she recoiled from the maneuver.

She could have sworn to have seen it. The image of her father with his neck ripped out. A sin of direct patricide she had just committed.

Because... this man... had only intended to use her... that was unquestionable... it was... surely... the only feeling he harbored...

Her eyes burnt, memories springing through them.

Locked behind bars, she saw the young figure of her father clutching the bars, begging to his own
"Listen to me, father!" He had begged, only genuine intentions within as he opposed the man, "we just need to kill every single Titan, right now! Why?! Why won't you understand?!

Years worth of begging amounting to nothing.

Nothing changed, no matter how much he begged.

"I know I'll be fine, brother," her uncle Uri spoke in reassurance before taking the ritual.

Nothing changed, no matter how much he prayed.

"Alma..." her father clutched at the feet of his favourite maid, pulling upon the ends of her skirt in pain. Her mother stood there, not knowing how to reply, "you're the only one who understands me..."

Nothing changed, no matter how much he sought.

"Leave it to me, father," this time her sister, Frieda said, "I won't let the ghosts of our ancestors get the better of me."

Nothing changed, no matter how much he tried.

The eyes of the monster would always be taken up by the next generation without fail.

And in return…

'… Oh God,' her father had thought as he saw the corpse of her mother, her throat slit and collapsed on the floor in a bloody puddle.

… he kept paying the price of his futile struggles.

The flesh of the Titan exploded, ending the struggles of Rod Reiss after several decades.

Historia was flung out from an explosion of steam as the Titan flesh dissipated intensely into the breeze.

The townsfolk saw the small body of the blonde soldier escape out of the smoke, as she made a fall in the direction of several roads to the side.

A dangerous fall. She had fainted midway, with the townspeople watching with the belief she was about to fall to her death.

She had lost consciousness as she drifted into the last remnants of her father.

He was gone.

She had cut the connection with the last bit of her past just now.

One might say that she was alone in a certain way again.

The soft cushioning arms which embraced her midfall told her otherwise.

Her eyelids peeled open, light sapphire irises connecting with fiery emerald.
"Eren…?" Historia verified her location, eyes filled in wonder at how she ended up there.

She was caught in a sort of half bridal style, one of Eren's arms around her back, holding her body up, while her legs were put together and the backs of her knees had been caught on one of his thighs.

Her hands were still holding onto the handles of her gear, the blades having fallen out after her attack, but were pushed against his chest and the shirt she had given him to wear not long ago.

Her body was so much smaller than his, and the one who was holding her was indeed Eren.

"Dammit…" the brunet muttered, managing a small smile to her, "if you're going to space out in mid air, at least make it easier for me to catch you."

"Eh?" Historia said, leaning further into his chest, her light weight not bothering him as she looked around.

A small wave of heat assaulted her, and her heart beat seemed to speed up, as if she was already back in the battle, as her pace matched his own fast beat.

They were somewhere, hanging from the wall of one of the houses, in Orvud district. The sky was clear, no signs of the massive behemoth that had been looking over the wall minutes ago.

The wires creaked, as Eren fiddled with the handle in his left hand, as she felt them start to descend. Eren had fired his anchor into the wall of a house somehow, after she seemingly ended up in his arms.

In a second, Eren's feet dropped off from against the wall, and landed on the ground, hers following after not being cushioned anymore.

She stumbled and straightened, arms still pressed against his chest as she looked up at his face again.

A similar shade of colour seemed to be on his cheeks, barely visible yet she was certain it was there.

"E-Eh!" Historia released herself and took a half pace away from him, touching the wall of they had been hanging off with her back,"w-what happened?"

"You did it," Eren replied, smiling fondly at her, "you dealt the last blow, like you said you would. I caught you just when you fell asleep a minute ago."

"O-oh… I… see," Historia breathed out. She felt… conflicted.

'Was that all… my imagination?' Historia thought back to the visions she had seen. What had caused that?

In his final moments, her father seemed to only wail in pain at everything he had struggled through.

"U-um… Eren," Historia looked back at him, a foot in front of her, "just now… I mean… when you caught me… than–"

"No, me first," Eren cut in, shaking his head as he looked down at her seriously. If anyone was to say it first, he thought it should be him. "For everything… back in the cave and when you got me out, and on the carri–"
The area was suddenly filled by various citizens emerging through the alleyways and from down the road, some jogging over.

"Were you the one to finish that Titan off?!" One of the leading townspeople asked immediately, not noticing the conversation between the two soldiers.

"You're the one who saved our town?!" Someone else called as they walked in, turning their attentions to the small blonde.

They had all seen her dealing the final blow, before the brunet soldier had swooped in from above and caught her in his dive, after gritting his teeth in struggle and firing out one of his anchors awkwardly.

Holding their breaths when the boy had seemed to be peril, the wire failing to stay set and having difficulties in maneuvering with the bad position he had caught the girl with.

Thankfully, they had seen Eren repositioning her midair and abandoning one of his arms and the anchor with it, and then firing his remaining one into a much smoother arc while holding Historia's small body into his.

They had landed in a street a few blocks down, and so much of the civilians had rushed over to confirm what they had seen.

The unnamed slayer of the horror and the soldier who saved her were before them now.

Eren turned round and deflated at the sudden crowd that had appeared out of nowhere. He had wanted to spend a moment with his Historia just now, but the chance had already gone.

"Uhm… we'll talk later…" Eren suggested, stepping aside for the people to get to see his smaller friend.

"Yeah… we'll have a better chance later…" Historia nodded in agreement, breathing out and taking a step onto the nearby wagon parked on the side of the road.

'Am I… really making… my own decisions…' she thought back to how all this started.

She hadn't been the one who wanted to be the queen. This was simply the next role she had been given to play.

'Perhaps not… or… I… don't know any more… but…' Historia considered it all. No. It wasn't her choice nor her wish to become a queen.

She had wanted to play no part in such a role. But –

'It certainly would be like me to get swept along by the crowd like this…' She raised herself onto the improvised stage as she turned to face the people, all looking at her expectedly.

It seemed to be somewhat natural to go along with the wishes of other people by now, whether it was her as Krista or Historia.

"…I am…" She began.

'… But… so long as you are always there to catch me the next time… so long as I have this calming strength… telling me that we're connected together by our paths…'

– She didn't know where exactly it began… but she felt the strength through her newfound
friend…

'I feel that I won't lose sight of the signs pointing the directions of this road… no matter in what
direction I might let myself be swept away…'

– She had built something from the mess she had gone into in the past…

'I feel that I'll always find my way to the end of the path which I was meant to go down…'

– A path between him and her…

"I am Historia Reiss."

"The true ruler of these walls."

The reign of the tyrant has began! A silence sets in through the crowd as nobody dares to
speak out first. Until –

"You know if you wanted to just appear taller, you could have just asked me to lift you up."

Historia's brow twitches, before she sends a blade flying at Eren trying to mix in and hide
with the crowd.

Also, it's been way too long now that I think about it… or so it feels like it has been, but more
than usual this chapter even when I tried to avoid that… but yeah, the next one should be 2
weeks from now hopefully, and as before, its not like I don't want to write longer chapters,
just does make it more difficult when I need an extra days worth to tuck in all the corners
after a longer chapter.

Ending Scene: WARNING MANGA SPOILERS - CONTAINS SPOILERS FOR SEASON 4
(OR WHAT WILL BE SEASON 4 AT LEAST)

The massive twin waves of catapulted bricks crushed the foundations of many buildings in the
vicinity, easily shattering the glass instantly from the small shockwaves caused.

The Titan of war held the large crystal shell in his right arm as he inspected the battlefield once
more, looking through the destroyed debris at the massive ape shaped Titan.

"Eren Jaeger," the Beast Titan spoke making eye contact over to him, extending out his arms after
swinging out the rocks he had thrown, "is not my enemy..."

There had been a connection between them as well.

It was truly an odd feeling, to have this sort of person connected to you after everything that had
happened.

But this connection was a chain by which they were both tied down to against their will, holding
the one of the keys to everything locked below the surface.

One pull in either way would send the other spinning along with the world in between them.

But neither of them had pulled the chain towards themselves even a fraction.
A special connection indeed, that gave hope to the advancing Titans.

It was special…

But it wasn't the same as his connection with her.
Firstly… I have no excuses lol? Actually I have many excuses why its taken a month and a half and all a mix of simple external factors I guess… so just… sorry for the late release lol?

WARNING: This chapter contains some short but highly lewd contents, including the almost unthinkable act of holding hands together in public. Those under the age of 21, are advised to seek advice from an a family member before viewing such content. The characters in this chapter are trained professionals, do not try this at home. Its so much that its M Rated!

But no, seriously, there will be no M rated content (aside from hand holding!) this chapter but there will be in the future – both as lemons and gore I guess? Gore is always such an unclear line to draw at since like saying 'he got his brain eaten out' isn't anything like writing a big description of the whole process, and like… where do you draw the line?! Either way, I still don't know for now if I will put the lemons into the main story or as a separate (perhaps 3 – 5 chapter or even more) entry because chapter content wise, but either way there will be some lewd-ish stuff later on since… Eren and Historia will make references to behind the scenes action!

Also, feel free to skip the first section as I work absolutely illogically and left the first section to last and just ended up using the extra content for it already so yeah… feel free to skip it please since its just the manga skipped content really! (You know the scene lol, still salty about it!)

Also just to point out, there will be some 'Before the Fall' spoilers in this fic (the prequel series of AoT), not that you need to read the prequel to understand what's going on here since the prequel is mainly just about the development of the ODM gear, but there will be some stuff on Naraka and the ice burst crystals which get detailed so yeah just so you know!

Also also, tfw when you notice and remember your cringy summary that you thought up on the spot before posting the first chapter of your fic… I remember reading fic where the author adds in "I suck at summaries"…. Not as easy as it looks lol, but yeah… hopefully… a little less cringy now? Mnot that the summary matters too much since its just 'slowburn canon divergent into EreHisu centric route of AoT' … basically right?

Discord invite: https://discord.gg/csQFFUC

"speech"

'thoughts' - Italics

Chapter 9 – Ausfall des Titan
"Wha?!" The blonde girl gasped awake, letting the drool run down her face as she suddenly woke up, leaning with her head in her arms on the table.

A familiar wave of sensations.

As if she had seen this many times before.

"Huh?" A brunet boy jerked up off the bed as he sat upright to look at her outstretched hand, "what's wrong?"

Grasping nothing.

"Nothing..." replied the girl, gazing in wonder at nothingness. "I was just sleeping..."

Alone together in a room.

"No wait... I feel like I had an important dream..." she tries to recall it, "but I can't remember anything about it..."

Different from a nightmare?

"Yeah," the boy comments, reassuring her that she wasn't the only one, "that happens to me a lot too."

Maybe not.

"... It's already so late!" He explained, walking towards the window by which she was sat at. "The sun's about to set... I'd like to think that with the captain they'll get results, but... are we really up against the Reeves company?"

His companion does not say her reply.

"Huh?" The boy looks over to the girl, who out of her huddled crossed arms, gives him only doe like eyes of emptiness.

The boy pulls the only other chair by the table and sits down.

"I'm sorry... I failed as a Titan... " he said, "and that's why we've got to waste all this time on tricks."

The girl lifts her head.

"... why are you apologizing to me?" she asked.

The boy scratches the back of his head.

"Huh?" He turns to her, trying to verify something, "... you want to rescue her now, right?"

The girl looks down in contemplation.

"Rescue..." she wondered aloud. "I feel like it wouldn't be... a rescue anymore."

"It's like you said. Back then, chose what life she would lead." The girl remembers back to the last parting with the closest person next to her, "I've got no right to interfere, and she doesn't
"All I have now... are some vague facts about my birth..." she continued, "... and a huge role that I don't see myself remotely cut out for."

"So..." The boy asked her, "what do... you want to do?"

..."... I don't know." The girl responded simply.

A lasting silence takes hold.

"I envy you," the girl confessed, "no matter how hard it gets... you always know what you want."

"It's not just you. Everyone's that way..." the girl talked about the people of the world dispassionately "they all have something important enough to them that they'd risk their lives for it."

"... I saw the real me... the me that chose the Survey Corps. The me that even I didn't know about." The girl explained, "but... after disappeared, I stopped understanding who I am... and what I want."

"You probably can't understand..." she looked at the boy in doubt, not expecting him to understand, "... how that feels."

The boy faced her solemnly.

"No." He declared. "I totally don't understand."

"We both live in this absurd world!" he exclaimed, "... where if we don't do something, we'll lose everything! We don't have time to feel conflicted."

"Right now, 's taking on a dangerous mission as your body double," the boy questioned her, "shouldn't you be more worried about him?"

"... sorry" She responded honestly. "But to be honest, I don't see why."

"... probably would've been worried for everyone." The difference between the two is set up. "... was a good girl."

"But... 's parents never loved her. Nobody did." The girl spoke, vacant off emotion. "Quite the opposite. No one wanted her to be born. Her story isn't even especially unusual. There are lots of kids like her in the underground..."

"So? Everyone was disappointed, right?" She instead asked for the response she expected, "that the real me was this empty. That I'm nothing like the good girl was."

"No... that's not true." The boy denied, "I don't know about the others... but I didn't really like the old you."

"... Huh?" The girl muttered.

"It felt like you always had a forced expression on your face..." he explained, "it was unnatural. A little creepy, honestly."
"..." The girl feels hurt, and uncertain of even her past now, "...oh."

"But… there's something I like about you now." The boy did a strange smile at her.

"… Huh?" The blonde girl gawked slightly in confusion again.

"You're just normal." The boy said. "Just a normal girl who's absurdly honest."

The last leaves were soon departing.

Never to exist again.

I totally do understand you.

, ~2001

The day was nearing its end as the blazing sunset was born once again, uncovered by the clouds.

The land was devoid of much of its usual life in preparation from the oncoming cold. The trees were reaching the last days to which they were capable of holding their leaves.

"Hmm, hmm," the little girl hummed contently as she read the book. She was sitting beneath such a tree in the half open countryside, undisturbed by any other visitors.

She leaned against the rough bark of it, finding a comfortable spot to lean against as she flipped another page.

The crisp golden leaves gave her a comfortable space to stretch her legs out over, without worry of getting it muddy from any damp spots of the earth.

"Hmph, hum humph, hum humph humph humph," she continued the made up tune. She flipped yet another page, approaching to the end of the book.

She was 9 years old, but already she could comprehend the extensive texts. She brushed back a strand of her blonde hair after the gentle breeze caused it to brush across her eyebrows.

The story was ending, just like all stories did.

She scratched her legs across the dead leaves, kicking up a few rotting apples that had dropped from the tree.

And then...

She turned the final page, reading the ending out loud: "And they all lived happily ever after, the End."

The young girl closed the book, set it down to the side for a moment the stretched satisfyingly. She had spent much of the day reading, from dawn till dusk.

She looked back, towards her home, just to the fence which marked the borders of it in the distance. She would have to return soon, though she knew punishment awaited her no matter how late she was.
The girl sighed, and stood up, dusting off some leaves which stuck to her handed down rags of a summer dress.

She picked her book up and looked at the world around her.

She looked and looked.

The horizon were vast, the lands distant.

What was she doing here?

How did it end up that she existed here.

Why did she even exist?

The girl thought about such things often.

She would work, she would read, she would dream.

Because she had been born into this world, she did these things and countless more.

But one day, she would meet her end.

Death might come for her in several years, the next day or even any second now.

Then what?

Now what?

What was she doing for all her life, simply existing.

What purpose did she have in existing?

If she was going to die anyway someday, what was so valuable about spending the next day living.

Living until the day your time came.

The life of cattle.

Awaiting the day of their slaughter.

What use was there for such a being to keep living?

The girl sighed, reaching the same conclusion as always. She would have to try a different story.

Maybe… in a different story… she might find the answer.

The answer to that question and many others…

She didn’t mean it in some suicidal or depressed way. The girl simply, truly wished to find something worth of fulfillment.

The girl always avoided any other kids her age, who seemed more than eager to pick on the weird girl of their age group for their own fun.

She was about to head home knowing that she wouldn’t come across any of them at this hour, but instead wished to feel the sun rays just for a little longer. She walked round the tree, feeling the
stump and she lightly dragged her hand on the aging wood as she walked clockwise round.

She would do this often. 9 rings around the tree and then she would go home.

The girl didn’t remember when she had started doing it as a child but it had become a habit to do so each time.

Nobody would ever come here.

Or so she had thought after 9 years of going to sit alone beneath this 9 branched apple tree.

"Wh - ACK?!" she let out a yelp as he turned round to the hallway point, exactly the opposite side from the spot where she would always be reading, and smacked face to face with a boy just a little taller than her.

"Agh!" The brunet boy let out as he stumbled back. Much to his annoyance, he ends up tripping on a root of the tree and falling on his back in annoyance.

He had been carrying a small carrying rack for sticks, causing all the firewood that he had collected earlier in the day to get thrown out and spread across the grass in an unorganized fashion.

"A-Ah I'm sorry!" the girl apologized, "I didn't know anyone else was here…"

"Tch, look what you did," the boy replies roughly giving her an annoyed look which she feels slightly afraid of. He stands up and shakes himself off before moving to pick up the pieces of firewood again.

He reaches for a stick only to touch the girl's hand who had likewise gone to pick up the same piece of wood.

They dart their hands away from each other the instant they realize they touched skin for even a moment and the girl scooted away as the boy frowned at her.

"I don't need your help," he snapped, proceeding to pick up the sticks once more, only for the girl to slowly come in and help him anyway. She make sure to avoid eye contact with him this time, only focusing on the task and ignores his scowling.

The boy loads the sticks into his carrier just as the girl hands him the rest of the sticks which she herself had piled up in her arms.

The boy takes them carefully and fits them into the racks as well, just as the girl moves away and says "I'm sorry. It was just an accid–"

"You..." the boy interrupts her, looking carefully at the girl in front of him for the first time in proper," what's your name?

They exchanged names.

"I, um... come here to read whenever I can," the girl continued, holding out the book to show the boy, "I didn't know anyone else came here."

The boy nodded and said, "I'm sorry for snapping at you."

The mood instantly lights up and the girl manages to smile happily, "it's okay! Hey, where do you come from?"
The boy cocks his head and points to the South, the girl's eyes following. In the distant, the small stone wall could be seen.

"Wait… you come.. from the people behind the stone wall?" The girl asked hesitantly.

It was forbidden by her people to interact with anyone that came from beyond the stone wall until they were adults. Right now, she had already broke a dangerous taboo that all the children from her people were always warned about.

"Do you come from the North…? From the people behind the wooden fence?" The boy asked hesitantly. Likewise, the same taboo existed in his own society.

The girl nodded in reply, confirming both of their suspicions.

Simply being here, right now, could cause them a great deal of trouble if they were discovered.

"I..." The boy began, "I... don't agree with my home rules... it's all just what the adults tell us to do... I don't have any reason to listen... The two of us meeting here is not doing any harm, right?"

"Yeah... I think... you're right," the girl agreed. She had once spoken out against her home rules one time. Se never dared to question them again. Yet she was not confessing her disagreements about it with the boy from beyond the stone wall.

"If you promise to keep this meeting a secret, then I will as will," the boy vows. It was also against the rules to lie at home, but so long as they didn't bring the topic up, they can keep everything a secret.

The girl nodded, "... okay. I promise."

The boy nodded and then hesitantly asked, "hey... I'm interested to know more about what's beyond the wooden fence.... Could you... tell me stories about it?"

The girl was frozen at first before she broke off into a huge smile.

It was the first time anyone had taken an interest in such things and the girl for the first time could share all the stories she knew from her home.

She began with telling him about how their home was made, who lives in it and what the sheep were always doing.

And the she told him of the most well known legend – The Story of 'HappilyEverAfterLand'

One long book, and one of the girl's favorites.

They said that in HappilyEverAfterLand, you would find the answers to everything that has ever existed.

– "Someday – I'll reach HappilyEverAfterLand myself!"

The girl said after finishing the story

The 'HappilyEverAfterLand'...

For some reason, the boy felt an ancient, ancestral feeling at the name.

They wanted to talk for longer, but the sun was already leaving and the night was approaching.
Before long, their supervisors might come looking for them.

"Okay… tomorrow then, we'll meet here again, right?" The emerald eyed boy departed.

"See you later... – " The sapphire eyed girl called the name of the first friend she ever made.

__________________________

Early Fall of the Year 850 – The Royal Palace at the Capitol City of Mithras in the Walls

She breathed out. She breathed in. A clean, dustless morning scent tickled every feature of her face as she lay on her back, facing the ceiling straight up.

Her forearm had stretched out from under the fine linen sheets and come to rest on her forehead. Historia sighed and looked the whole way round the room.

Her first day as Queen.

A ruler that had the crown placed into hands.

At first, she didn't want this.

But it had been unavoidable.

But at least… she wasn't let it all go to waste…

This way she could fulfill the wish she found at that very moment…

A different way. She would have rather have done it a different way.

But such thoughts no longer mattered when there was no turning back now.

And at least, being Queen was not without its perks.

Historia played the mind threw the dream she had.

For some reason, the ones that felt important where no longer so easily forgotten.

Instead they were now faded slightly, but she could remember all the sounds clearly.

Eren…

She was sure that it had been Eren and her in that dream.

Eren…

She slowly managed to sit herself back up, examining the room. Her room.

Intricate patterns of carefully applied rich paints on the fine masonry and expensive bricks which set up the walls on the room. There were about a dozen clear glass windows around the room, and deep red curtains with gold trimmings showing off the wealthy fabrics.

'Too big...' Historia sighed, repeating the thought she had yesterday the moment she stepped in, 'way... too big...'

The room itself was practically as big as the entire training camp dormitories, built to provide bedding for about a hundred people.
There were two desks set up and ready for paperwork to accumulate, along with the necessary equipment all prepared.

Aside from that however, the room was mainly empty space. No proper decorations nor paintings had been set up and the large bed itself, of which her frame only required and usually accustomed to a 1/8 of, was the biggest thing in the room.

That too, was too big for her. Though Historia of course was aware of what it was designed for, its not like she had any companion to share it with.

There was nobody on her mind at all, seemingly vaguely familiar from the dream she just woke up from that ever crossed her thoughts. No one. No one at all.

Historia sighed again and decided to slip out from the corner of the bed she had taken refuge in, stumbling on the ground as she woke herself up and made her way to her own personal bathroom connected by the side door.

She then bashed her nose on the bathroom door. Historia blinked in confusion as she rubbed the soreness away and blinked again.

She put her hand on the door handle again, pressed it down and pushed. The door did not budge. She then decided to pull it back towards herself and this time the doors opened.

Historia walked in grumbling to herself, used to cheaper sliding doors and having the door opened for her in general by anyone who saw the cute little Krista approaching.

She set herself up underneath the shower after tossing her night clothing to the side, glaring at it lightly. A first time for many things again.

It had been too late yesterday for her to bothered with anything and she had spent the evening staring out of the windows one by one at the palace grounds all around her, each of them practically devoid of life with the exception of a few carriages she spotted bringing in military material and patrolling nightguards.

In the training camp, you either bathed in the river or from the small bathhouse which consisted of a single small tub which had to be filled with water that the recruits would have to fetch themselves if they wanted to use it.

A shower system was something that only those heading to the MPs would probably ever have available, and as such it was a first time for Historia as well.

She examined the piping across the ceiling, evidently what carried the water to her bathroom by some means or other. There were 6 valves, connecting to 6 different pipes.

Historia had been quickly briefed by on of the recently appointed officials that would serve as her aide, and been instructed to shower every morning before dressing in the military clothing that had been placed in her wardrobes.

Usually, the recruits would shower around once a week, if even that often. It all depended on how tired they usually were. Even so, Historia felt it was better to get this over with and not neglect what she had been asked of.

Standing directly below the sprinkle shaped showerhead, she chose a turning head at random and pulled it clockwise until it got loose.
Nothing happened. Historia frowned before turning it a couple more oscillations, this time hearing some faint humming through the pipes.

She looked around again, but found nothing beyond the 6 little wheels as her options. She then moved up, to the top most one and likewise turned it clockwise.

At first nothing happened again, until –

"Eh-AGH?!" Historia yelped as scolding hot water started gushing out from the fixed showerhead and straight down at her bare skin, burning her slightly at the touch.

Hot water. That was another thing she had never had until now, being used to the cold stream water which would occasionally turn warm-ish on the hotter summer days.

"Eep!" Historia jumped back and tried to protect her head, which had been the first subject to the steaming assault, and ended up tripping onto her back.

The ground was hard but it had been smoothed out entirely so that the water would flow down the drain at the corner of the room.

She glared at the oncoming water which caused two of the pipes to shake slightly, the lower slightly more than the upper one.

Historia tried to get round the hot spray, and back to the valves, deciding to close them off first, though her skin kept getting hit by some spits of steam, she managed to slowly shut off the water supply.

She sighed in relief as she managed to stand directly below the showerhead again, back to when she started. *First thing that needs to be done… find the guy who designed this and teach him a lesson…* she vowed, before then attempting to try again.

Historia then spent 4 further hours of the morning cursing the whole room before then crawling out of the room uncaringly.

She left wet trails of footprints along the carpet and let the water drip everywhere from her hair and naked body as she lumbered dizzily from the unexpected exhaustion.

She collapsed on the bed, face first and rested. After spending the whole morning trying to get ready, Historia had still not figured out how the bathing system worked.

She sighed into the bedding and kicked her feet up and down before getting up again and moving to the few drawers in the side of the room and opened everything up, beginning to examine her range of new property.

Her head felt woozy from the heat in the bathroom, and her head in general felt oddly convoluted and unfocused.

Dresses which she would normally never had had the chance to ever see, let alone wear, and… things she vowed never to wear and to be disposed at her earliest chance.

Historia opened another draw, finding the undergarments lined up neatly. She was accustomed to the more typical loincloths which everyone back in training would wear, never having the ability to invest in anything of better make.

‘Oh… is that…?’ She thought, pulling up a mid sized bra. She took a step before facing herself in
front of the mirror, still completely naked as she placed it towards her chest.

Her breasts were barely developed and there was no world in which the size of this piece of undergarment would ever fit her. It didn't particularly bother Historia since she never needed to be concerned like many of her other fellow female trainees in requesting for such necessities from their families, or worse for those who didn't have anyone to go to like Historia herself, the instructors.

Quite naturally, Historia just like a number of the girls stuck to using bandage cloths to hide her small chest easily.

Historia continued looking into the mirror, cocking her head as she remembered a particular scene, back as Krista, that she witnessed a few times between a few of the secret crushes and lovers, the more insouciant and boisterous cadets or just between friends when asking for an honest opinion.

"Heeey Eren, what do you think~?" Historia, lost in the moment, accentuated her voice while smirking with a light pose in the mirror, testing out the clothing.

…

Historia then froze for the moment, still as a statue as some odd feeling grabbed every bit of her, realising what she had just said.

"Ah… a-ah… ah…" She dropped the piece of clothing she was holding to her chest and backed away, lips trembling as she stared disbelievingly in the mirror.

And then shrieked in her mind as she tripped back onto her bed as she moved in reverse through the room.

She faced the ceiling for a little while before rolling over and hiding her face from the empty room, breathing heavily

'No... no, n-not like that... t-that's not the way in which I m-meant it...' Historia kept repeatedly telling herself that as she tumbled the sheets into further disorder, '... j-just as a friend's opinion... yeah... E-Eren's someone who w-would give me an honest opinion...yeah... that's all... yeah…'

Her head popped up from the blanket and examined the room carefully and the view from the windows, naturally finding no-one who could have seen what she had just done.

'That's why I w-would want his opinion...' Historia reassured herself, curling up in as she tried to wash away the memory, 'y-yeah... Eren's opinion would be the best... b-because of that... and I need... an... opinion... be... because…'

Historia stayed there for a while before gaining her seriousness again and remembered how they haven't talked things through between themselves like Eren said that day.

He still hadn't told her what he wanted to say after Eren caught her… after Eren gave his whole life to her hands that day in the cave… after they got kidnapped together, journeyed together and spent several days in hiding at the wood-side house together… just the two of them… all alone, except for the two of them…

After what he said to her… the words which seemed to resurrect something about her… after he lead her, protected her and tried to stand up for her…

Historia got changed properly, thinking about everything. It was already noon and she had been
told to attend the military meetings after lunch.

All the while… Historia did not stop rummaging through so many memories of Eren in a brief space of time, then back for 3 years worth as cadets despite being in a very different relationship back then…

It was odd with how Historia thought that, as Krista at least, she hadn't interacted much with Eren at all… and yet… she remembered… the first week of training as he struggled to balance himself on the gear properly… all the times he and Jean would always set the entire cafeteria into uproar… the times he would spar against Reiner and Annie… seeing him wandering around with Mikasa and Armin…

The moment he succeeding in passing the first stage of the ODM gear… him flying through the trees as he felt the wind and the sky around him… the way he would sneak out to practice at night… the times he would slice through the dummy Titans in the exams… and the times just before and after the graduation ceremony… all the things that he said…

…

When had she started to pay attention from the corner of her eyes while she chatted alongside Ymir? Why had she looked at him so many times in the past and the recent week?

'What… do I… even think about him…' Historia thought, struggling at an answer.

It was clear at least now that she thought about it… maybe in the past it had just been curiosity and some wish for how he might turn out. Eren was after all one of the most well-known trainees in the past…

But… recently… what was the feelings which would always surge through her whenever their eyes made contact.

As if she could feel a shared fate with him… as if she was connected by something to him…

Historia huffed, checking herself in the mirror as she adjusted the new royal military attire designed for her.

She needed to leave. It was this room. This… everything new to her that's got her wishing for some old parts of her to remain unchanged.

This whole thing was making her do things she normally never would… this whole thing… was the cause. Absolutely. Definitely. No question about it.

She had been forced to change, and to move on. Doing stuff that were perhaps more 'normal' just like… Eren said…

'No good, no good… one step at a time…' She shook herself and slapped her cheeks before inspecting her uniform.

A shield symbol had come to replace the wings of freedom above her heart. The symbol of protection, just like the barriers she was named the ruler of.

She checked herself again before leaving as she opened the door, this time successfully pushing it open. She looked around the hallway, and round the corners of her doors to find –

One guard. Sleeping on the floor against the wall.
Historia looked at him puzzledly, 'Did he really just sleep through all of that…?'

Still slightly worried in case he did in fact hear any bit of her, she tried to shake him. The guard in the midst of sleep ended up lightly slapping the Queen's arms away.

Historia huffed disappointingly. She had been informed that the guards had not been fully selected yet but she wasn't exactly have high expectations anymore, no matter what they tried to reassure her.

She turned herself away and began strolling down the hall again, confident enough at least that she could at least conjure up an excuse in the worst case scenario that he did overhear her.

Eren.

He was the one person who was closest to her now. If someone would ask her, 'who's your best friend?' it was definitely Eren.

'Eren…'

She stopped, uncaring of where she even was after wondering randomly.

'Eren… isn't… here…'

She had seen him only yesterday but he was no doubt already far away from the capitol. Historia was alone. There was nobody here that she could call a friend, there was nobody from the rest of the 104th nor from any other but of her past.

And no best friend for here right now…

That was surely why her heart ached. That was surely enough to make her heart ache. There was surely no other reason.

Unless… maybe… just maybe… it hurt because she might just maybe see Eren as something a bit more than that…

---

**Yesterday – Crowning Ceremony in the Capitol Mithras**

Thousands of citizens had gathered and allowed entry to the capitol of Mithras to this special occasion. The crowning ceremony of any new king would usually result in a great gathering of the nobility.

The recent revolution however allowed for the first time in the known 107 years of human history for commoners to be admitted to the ceremony.

It was also the first time in 107 years that a ruler from the true royal family was to be crowned, albeit an illegitimate child. This detail had easily been gathered up through the suppression of the nobles and members of the Wall Cult.

However, it was still a fact that the blood of the royal family still run through her veins, and that there was no longer any other such person who could be the centerpiece of a monarchy.

Of course however… this also marked the end of any actual monarchy for the people of the Walls.

The military had seized control. The Queen about to be crowned was merely a cover for it, and the people knew it.
The military made no effort to hide such a thing either, they themselves directing the procedure of the coronation.

The fine gold crown was lifted from the luxurious red cushion it had been carefully set up on. The commander-in-chief Darius Zackley lowered the thinly bejeweled diadem onto the brushed down blonde hair of the former soldier kneeling on the royal carpet laid down.

Historia no longer hesitated, accepting the fate oncoming to her. She was ready in her posture signifying the vow to the religious script she had just sworn to. Her pure white dress was of a religious design, lacking any intricate patterns or gems that would be usually found in a monarch’s clothes.

The whole world was silenced as the whole crowd watched the crown be placed down.

The instant it touched down, Historia felt it. A sense of discomfort and weight at the value that the crown bore, even with the military’s power that it would be accustomed to.

"YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!" the clamor of the spectators cut through the momentary silenced air, screams of joy and well wishes unleashed for the significance of the moment.

"That girl defeated a Titan twice the size of the walls?" a middle aged man asked another doubtfully.

"Yeah. A bunch of Orvud district residents saw it for themselves!" The slightly younger man responded as they both decided to join in with everyone else.

"… She protected us from the Titans with that delicate frame…” a group marveled, and so the tales spread fast.

They clapped, they cheered and they raised their fists in the air as they shared the achievements of the new Queen. The military, including the five highest ranking leaders from each of the three regiments, all clapped their fists onto their hearts, giving the symbol for the dedication.

A military’s oath of entrusting the ruler with playing her role while they themselves ruled the Walled world.

"Her father ruled from the as King from the shadows, but when he went out of control, she stopped him herself!" The praise of the new Queen kept building and building as it go pread through the crowd and out to all the people within the Walls.

"She’s the true ruler of these Walls!" Flegel joined in, from beside Hanji and Moblit in the crowd who were overseeing the reporters beginning the first Berg Newspapers article of the new ruler.

And then a great cheer simultaneously roared out from various directions, just as the girl in question bowed down slightly to the military commanders bowing before her.

"QUEEN HISTORIA!" the crowd sang.

The shout rang out twice, thrice and then again.

Erwin Smith amongst the five bowing before the new Queen remembered back to the battle. The moment just before, on top of the wall, as the former Survey Corps member stood up to him resolutely.
"Say it was me who finished off that Titan!" the young girl had pleaded, "if you do, it should bring the people inside the Walls together and stabilize the situation!"'

Uncertain over her safety, he wished to advise against it, though decided to remain passive to the girl's wishes.

- But.

'To think that she'd actually be the one to stop him…' Erwin thought, truly bowing in respect to the former soldier.

"YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!" the whole populace roared their approval.

She lifted herself up, giving the military salute herself, indicating her dedication.

And the looked threw the whole crowd, eyes scanning for a certain other pair.

Historia felt disconnected from them all. It was… just like before…

But those emerald eyes were an exception…

She looked threw the whole crowd continuous clapping and cheering, sending well wishes and oaths to her.

Historia practically bounced in joy to a strange extent when she finally spotted him, along with Armin and Mikasa towards the corners of the crowds, near to wear the buildings into the palace were. The whole group of her former friends, now seeing Jean, Sasha and Connie a little further down, were cheering as hard as they could.

Except for Eren. He was pretty far away, but Historia could have sworn that he was frowning, as if concerned about something.

At first he didn't realize she was looking at him, but before long he seemed to take notice and lift his hand to wave before putting it down again. He was most definitely concerned about her.

The role of being a Queen which she was so afraid to take up a few days ago, and the role which she was playing now.

The corners of her lips turned upwards just a little bit, as she disguised the nod directed towards Eren specifically with a bow in his direction, and then turning to bow to the crowd around slowly, bowing her head to each of them.

Historia hoped he may have caught the meaning behind her gesture of reassurance. But…

Somehow she just knew that he did.

Historia Reiss was crowned the first official Reiss monarch, the Ruler of the Walls –

Queen Historia I.

An Hour Later – In the Hallways

"Hold on," Eren caught up to her first, pushing on he asked "are you really going to do it,
Historia had appeared before them all suddenly as they all conversed for a moment before the new Queen stated that she had something to do first.

"What… you said yourself that I should," Historia reminded her friend. It was part of the reason why she was so certain about it as Eren himself had said it. Okay, maybe it was the main reason why she was going ahead with it at all.

Eren looked at her concernedly, chewing on his own words and how he so quickly jumped on back then in the heat of the moment to try and cheer Historia up.

"It was the Reeves company boss's final request… or, should I say, final joke?" Eren reminded her, as he too remembered the scene.

"Once you become Queen, smack him and tell him this: 'I dare you to him me back!' " Dimo Reeves had advised the then yet to be Queen Historia.

"If you can let it go, you should," Eren tried to advise her. This was the least of his worries right now, as he intended to ask Historia something more personal instead.

"I'm not fit to be a Queen unless I do it," Historia replied, looking back at him defiantly, trying to not let her spirit fail.

"Yeah, Historia! That's the spirit!" Jean instead cut in and encouraged her, a devious grin impossible to remove plastered on his face.

"Hey you stay out of this horse-face!" Eren suddenly snapped, annoyed at the interruption, almost accidentally causing Armin to bump into him.

Sasha and Connie followed them all with grins of anticipation on their faces, and even Mikasa seemed oddly interested in what was about to unfold.

"H-hey, hey, why are you getting pissed all of a sudden?" Jean quirked an eyebrow at the brunet, feeling that he was being far to serious.

It would be improper for Historia to back down on a promise just after being crowned Queen. What was the worst that could happen?

"!" Historia noticed the small man in a long military coat in the distance of the hallway that she had been told that Captain Levi was waiting.

Eren however didn't.

"Why do you think dumbass? You want…" Eren bit back at Jean until he noticed that they had all stopped walking and followed the direction they were looking.

Noticing the captain, he was about to move forward to Historia's front.

"… Ah… uh…" The blonde seemed to shudder and formed her hands into two fists.

"AAAAAH!" Historia yelled as she took a big stomp forward, swinging back her fist to put some strength into the punch.

"!" The whole group of friends became alarmed and found the scene oddly reminiscent of 2 weeks
ago, when Eren himself had stood up as he punched the Smiling Titan.

They all had to agree though that Captain Levi was a far bigger threat than any abnormal Titan.

"Ah," Historia let out as she landed a hit on humanity's strongest soldier, even causing him to get pushed back a little. Her strength had halved instantly as before the punch as a sudden fright took over her, though the hit still sounded through the hallways.

"YEAAAAH!" Jean cheered the loudest, followed by Sasha and Connie. Mikasa simply smiled subtly from the back, impressed for just a brief moment.

Eren gaped in response, fear likewise dotting on his face just like Armin who was behind him. His childhood friend nudged him forward a little as they exchanged a brief side nod.

"HA HA HA!" Historia stepped back once and to Eren's side again. She punched her fists into the air, trying to muster up a confident smile, she dared to ask him "now what?! I'm your Queen! Whaddaya got to say n--"

Then, the first signs of the slightest movement, and before he knew it, Eren immediately took a step forward, ready to get in the way of the captain and Historia.

"?!" Eren and the whole group froze as sudden terror clouded their faces just as their captain shrugged and lurched forward towards the Queen.

"?!

Eren and the whole group froze as sudden terror clouded their faces just as their captain shrugged and lurched forward towards the Queen.

But –

"Heh... Thanks..." Levi said and smiled. The captain smiled for the time they had ever seen, "... all of you."

They all gazed in utter silence for a whole minute, a pleasant atmosphere forming from the whole of the newly tested and experienced Levi Squad and former member, now turned Queen.

"We'll be heading out soon," Levi simply stated before turning their back to them, not dropping his smile, "good work... each and every one of you."

The captain left them still in silence as he walked down to the end of the hallway, hands in his pockets, and turned down, disappearing from their sight.

The whole group of friends all seemed to take a moment to brief various thoughts as they all whispered to each other, making sure this wasn't all some daydream they were sharing.

Until at last –

"AH?!” the Queen yelped out as Eren clapped his hand on Historia's shoulder giving her a comforting look. Historia let out an annoyed huff, "don't do that Eren... Or do you really wish to put your Queen into such distress? You better think twice next time, even if you are a Titan shifter!"

The whole group, minus a Mikasa, had practically fallen out of their skins when Historia yelled. The Queen turned round to Eren before the group could say anything else and placed her hands on her hips with a wicked smirk, unbefore seen to any of them.

"Already playing the tyrant Queen, your Majesty?” Eren smiled back knowingly, and patted her again for a while as they stayed there, staring into each other's eyes playfully. The rest of the former 104th watched on in silence, at the strange bond that had suddenly appeared between the
two.

Historia already playing the role of the Queen was an interesting development, but when had Eren suddenly gotten on such close terms with her?

They all gave Eren weird looks, and then –

Poof!

"Hah, I'll forgive you this one time Mr 'Hope of Humanity'," Queen Historia declared after punching Eren as well, "see that your attitude before your Highness has improved the next we meet!"

Eren chuckled, relieved that Historia wasn't at least completely opposed to her new title. Which was more than he could say for himself.

The fact that Historia had the energy to play on an act like that was the reassurance that he needed. He had been concerned for a while even after catching her nod from the crowds.

But once he saw her eyes.

He knew that she was alright with this now.

Maybe not completely, but she made the choice of her own accord.

It would be fine.

She would be fine.

She surely... will be fine...

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 - Day 1 of Being a Queen**

Historia sighed again for the umpteenth time that day. She made sure to hide it this time from the aide assigned as her secretary.

The middle aged woman, who would be instructing the Queen on any work, came across as very strict, though Historia at least felt there was no ill intent coming from her. The strained marks seemed to emphasize the stress in her face and her hair was already beginning to gray slightly.

And not that she would dare to say it aloud, but Historia had already forgotten the woman's name after being given it in a rushed manner the day before.

Historia sat up, checking herself properly as she had been strongly told to do so by the female attendant who led her to this meeting.

"First thing on the agenda, is to decide how to handle the aristocracy," one of the military officials began. An elderly man wearing the shield symbol just like her, identifying him as a member of the royal regiment, a sub group of the supposed 'elite' of the Military Police who had worked their way up to the top of the ladder.

There weren't many in this small division assigned to the Palace alone, likely no more than 80 would be holding this position. All individuals were those who performed significantly during their service in any of the regiments or had the support to get the prestigious position awarded to them.
In other words, a mix between the experienced managers and relatives of wealthy politicians. It wasn't hard to tell them apart.

"It's a difficult situation to handle, however we can't afford them rebelling on us next," one of the MPs near the front, signaling his seniority in the branch summed up the obvious that almost caused Historia to roll her eyes in front of everyone.

The room consisted of about a dozen men, split into two aisles that half of which were seated behind, all of them from the military brigade. Then at the front, she sat in the middle, with commander-in-chief Zackley on the left and her aide Miss 'Please-Someone-Say-Something-To-Make-Me-Remember-Her-Name' aide to her right.

"The first end of the extreme would be to begin a system of proscriptions," the man, who was sat at the desk directly below the three of them, continued. He was the elderly man who began the meetings and would take notes on the final outcomes of the debates.

"And where do we banish those aristocrats off to? The Titan territory? Even sending off a few of them would incite the other nobles to rebel!" waved off a man sat in the middle of the left line pointed out doubtfully.

"I think we will be all in agreement that it's taking it a step too far," Zackley spoke up from next to her, nodding along with the direction of the debate, "a wide scale rumour could spread quickly and even the whispers of one would not be prudent of us."

The commander-in-chief was really the true ruler of the Walls. Despite the seating arrangement for tradition's sake, it was quite clear who was in charge within the room.

"We can't afford uppermost nobilities loose at least, especially those four who played that played around with the fake King's backing," another practically shouted, spitting out his evident loathing.

"That's right, we'll need to silence them somehow forever without setting the other aristocrats into a panic if they think we will come after them next," yet another added. And Historia had already lost track of who was talking.

"We already have the charge of break Clause 6 of the Charter of Humanity," one of the ones who spoke before added.

"Yes, if they were intending to send anyone who opposed them to the gallows under that same charge, it's fitting for them to meet that end," another stated his opinion.

"What of the fake King Fritz himself?" the leading royal palace official brought up into question.

"Send him along as well," that MP suggested again.

"He sat on his ass and let it happen all day, we don't want him and his family wanting to reclaim that comfort on their seats again," another agreed with him.

"And what of their families and relatives?" the royal official put into question as well.

"Let's just string them up and behead them," another waved off their executions.

"But what of… their children?" asked yet another.

"Send them all away to hanging," still another issued.
"We don't want their descendants to get their heads filled with wanting to avenge their relatives in the future," and then another clarified.

"Is that not taking it to far?" and another queried.

"Nonsense. There's no reason to take such a risk. Have we not learnt that from fighting the Titans?" another compared.

"That's right. We must cut off any loose ends while we still can," and another.

Historia could not take it at that point.

Another would speak, then another would agree, then another would question, then another and another and another...

She felt sick.

She felt like her stomach was being crushed by just looking at the filthy mouths of the greedy men 'talking' between each other.

They weren't all like that, however the couple that seemed more reasonable, were quickly getting closed down by the pressure of those who seemed afraid of opposing power.

Historia felt like leaving the room immediately, not wishing to be involved with such a discussion. Was this how all meetings were going to be like?

However, she was Queen now. And there was no way she could run away now.

Historia could not bring herself to possibly back down, no matter how much her insides screamed for her to escape.

Her role a Queen over the meetings was to 'preside over discussions' on paper, though her job in these one were simply to observe. She didn't know how much her say would mean, but she needed to try here at least.

"I..." Historia began, barely letting the mutter travel from her lips. Nobody heard her of course as they continued to discuss equally severe punishments as they began to discuss more discreditable methods.

"I..." Historia tried again, raising her voice properly to the room, catching half of the members' attentions while the other half began to quite down.

Their eyes all looked at the young girl in doubt, telling her to not get involved in things she had no experience in.

Historia hated that she somehow agreed, yet the part of her telling her to continue and not to back down against them, prevailed over her.

"I... believe..." she cut out the stammering in her voice and spoke in a manner she could only picture as a Queen, "that we should at least spare the children... and anyone else who was not involved of the crimes committed by the four ministers, should be absolved..."

The room was silent. Historia began to feel increasingly worried, struggling to know where she should be keeping her eyes at.

Feeling the light yet hidden scowls of the MPs who clearly wished to oppose had her wishing to
look away and avoid their faces entirely.

She knew to not hold eye contact with any individual when addressing a whole group but it was getting increasingly difficult to not create some weird tension in the room.

She tried to linger more on the couple officials who seemed in support for a more lenient sentence. Yet to her disappointment, they seemed the most intent at avoiding her gaze.

Historia held herself for all the silence length, forgetting to blink through the whole thing while she openly displayed her wish.

"I think it would be a sensible option to hold back on making direct attacks on groups of the aristocracy," Darius Zackley at last concluded, after examining her for a while, "let us make the statement of executing those of the old order and restraining those indirectly involved in the political affairs."

In the end it had been agreed just as the commander-in-chief declared.

"Very well. Are we decided? For the crime of putting their own self-interest above all and threatening the existence of the human race, the strict but righteous decision has been made to execute only those directly involved in violating the aforementioned charter. Any objections?"

"No objections," the dozen MPs all answered simultaneously.

Again and again.

"Regarding the relatives of those four, those over the age of 12 and able to serve in the military will be sentenced to imprisonment. And those who had not been informed will be released after the year's end, or until the possibility of any revolts has sufficiently lowered. Any objections?"

"No objections," the voice of the 12 men sounded once again.

"Next. The nobility in question outside of the uppermost group can still be a threat to us if we don't watch on them," the royal official moved on.

The argument continued again.

It was exactly the same. Endless arguments that could have taken a quarter as long to deal with, dragging on with picking at every bit.

Historia didn't raise anything against the council this time.

In part she didn't need to as the punishments here were much less severe, but a nagging feeling told her that she wouldn't have raised any objection in any event.

While the argument was going on, the commander-in-chief, passed her a piece of paper as she took it carefully, just as a quill and ink were placed at her desk by her aide.

She scanned through the official document, surmising the conclusion and details of the new decree that had been approved by the commander-in-chief and had a blank space for her own name.

She signed it carefully, trying her best to make it as neat as possible despite her obvious lack of practice.
She hesitated a bit before she began, causing a blot of the black dye to sink down and through the paper.

The gravity of seeing her name on this suddenly dawned on her.

She was approving this.

Once her name was on it, it would stay on forever.

The one who bore the responsibility for anything which came as a result of this new decree, was her.

Once she signed it, there was no going back.

Any blame that is needed, would ultimately lie with her.

She breathed in and dragged the ink across.

Before she knew it, it was done.

Her name below everything had been written.

Her aide took the paper and placed it to the side, before bringing out another to copy details from the new decree onto it.

"Very well. Political families and those related to them will have their titles revoked and are to be sent to detention facilities scattered across the land. Any objections?"

The next call was made after another dispute. Historia could notice some more patterns now. The ones pushing for greater punishments seemed to hold some sort of personal resentment for them.

The one who would agree with everything, at the very end of the table, seemingly trying to get the favour of the higher ranking men.

Another who would try and impose any fines or wealth confiscations, trying to increase the amount of money they would possess and no doubt that he would get a share of.

"For the remaining aristocracy that did not play a part in the old order's system of rule or work in accordance with them, different levels of taxation are to be set for those who agree to cooperate with the military and those who oppose us. Any objections?"

The same happened again.

And again and again.

She had no favour of the aristocracy, but no matter what, she couldn't bring herself to hold any favour for some of these men either.

It reminded her of what Eren used to say. To call Jean out for in the dining halls back as Trainee Corps. Things had ended differently of course, but it was funny to look back at now.

She didn't know Jean particularly well, though he was always friendly back with 'Krista', unlike many of her peers who seemed to want her attention, he was more focused on Mikasa as he once heard. But she was at least sure that someone like Jean wouldn't exactly be like this either.

The wish to play the system, and escape the Titans. She doubted that any of these men had arisen
to this point, driven by such a motivation when at their time of enlistment, Wall Maria had still been standing.

Well… it always felt like Jean himself seemed to want to escape from something else as well. Either way, he ended up joining the Survey Corps in the end.

Historia focused back into the meeting, still rambling on in a way which brought the sickness back to her stomach.

She didn't want to be here. And likely nobody wanted her to be here either.

But she had to endure for now. She bit back a yawn as she fell into her memories again. At least thinking back to the past, pushed away the sickness she felt whenever she listened to the men.

The meeting continued. The arguing continued.

And the hours trickled by, with Historia only needing to sign off the paper at the end of every topic.

Again and again.

Until at last, they were released from the meeting. 8 hours had still passed and Historia was told that only the first step of the new order had been completed after that.

Historia was gestured to leave by her aide first, breathing silently in relief as the doors closed and she was out of that room.

She was in the hallway again, and being led on by her supervisor. She looked through the great windows and saw how the dark was creeping in fast now.

"Your Majesty," her aide called again as they suddenly came to a halt as Historia walked up beside her. She internally winced as she read the waves of displeasure.

"Please wake up promptly tomorrow. Your lessons will begin in the morning," her aide strictly said, implying that resistance was futile.

"L-Lessons?" Historia stammered. Since training a soldier was considered a 'school' by all means, Historia's education amounted to 3 years there, although she at least knew how to read, unlike a good number of the cadets at first.

"Yes," the aide stated simply, and then pulled out the first paper from her arms, showing it to the young Queen, "starting with your hand writing your Majesty."

Historia practically squirmed on the spot as she looked at the paper for the meeting, where just her signature, and nothing else had been written by her. Compared to the neatly written words by the official who wrote the above, Historia's handwriting was naturally not up to scratch, but –

"I-Is it that bad?" Historia asked, trying to ease the situation a bit. Compared to reading, writing was not something she had ever practiced until 3 years ago, but she had done her best to copy the letters and new how to spell things correctly…most of the time…

"I'm afraid so, your Majesty," the aide ensured, "I appreciate your youth, however this will need to be addressed at once. Please wake up at dawn tomorrow or not long after, and you will receive lessons from 8 in the morning, until the noon. After that, you will proceed to the meetings in proper fashion which I will also teach you tomorrow."
They started walking again, Historia wishing to just slink into the shadows and hide for a moment. Had she been doing things not befitting of a Queen the whole day?

"Please also keep your hands folded neatly on your lap and not hanging down or clenching the ides of the table," the elder woman said, as if to answer her, "please do not refuse the maids to assist you when dressing if you can't tell the insides of your dress from the out. Please do not wave your body side to side as you walk, though I appreciate its become natural after training with ODM gear for a long time, that habit will need to be fixed…"

Each thing that the woman pointed out about her flaws, felt like a couple punches to Historia. She felt she had at least done an okay-okay job at first impressions.

"… Please do not wiggle in your seat too much. Please do a better job of hiding your yawns if you must do so at all. Please do not roll your eyes so obviously in front of everyone…" the woman continued with the string of requests that Historia already was struggling to remember. "Please do not hesitate when addressing soldiers formally ranked below, and for now… please do not make put yourself in any difficult position with the other members of the council."

"Yes… ma'am..." Historia wordlessly nodded, feeling like she received a scolding after scolding.

"But… you did well your Majesty," the elder woman's tone suddenly changed completely.

"… Eh?" Historia questioned, surprised at the sudden praise. Not that the one line of approval matched to her reprimands.

"To speak your voice like that, for a young lady such as yourself, your Majesty," the woman stopped again and turned to her, now looking more like some kind grandmother, and not one that ignored her existence. "You will need to make sure not too stammer next time, however you did well for your first try."

Historia felt better. Only slightly better, but better. She nodded more smoothly, understanding that the elderly woman was only doing her job as well, and doing her best to fix up the Queen's act.

"As you are aware, we are still in the early stages of dealing with any immediate risk to our new government, your Majesty," the woman coughed, and regained her utter strict and forced expression. "Your attendants will be selected over the next few days. If you have any matters you wish to arrange, then please speak through me first. There will be some things which require a council to be held for discussion, much like today, while others you have full authority over."

Historia's heart beat again. She had been struggling over the whole day of whether she should ask about it, but had decided to wait for the moment to be asked.

"Um, y… yeah, I..." the Queen began, already failing in her manner of speech as she saw the light scowl on her aide's face, "in… this world… there are people that are born with nothing."

Her aide blinked before nodding, uncertain of where this was going. She remained silent as she listened to her new mistress's talk.

"I… struggle to understand many things because I was like that."

Historia rubbed her hands, at the side.

"People who think that it would be better if they were never born…"

The truths they realize when they come to face with them…
"There are some people who face many things and start to think that as well…"

When she looked into his eyes that day… and she remembered the promise she made with Ymir…

"There are many people like that…"

That was when she knew.

"It's just an open-ended and idealistic wish, but…"

If there was one way she could live just like Ymir had said…

"I wish to go out and find them… no matter who they are… and save them from that…"

It would be doing something which she understood…

Historia remained silent as she waited for a response. Would she be told off for being childish now? To try and think of proper things.

"I see… then I could not have hoped for a better lady to attend to." The woman said just as Historia looked up to see her old wrinkled lips tucked into a tender smile.

A face which showed a hidden story behind them.

"I will look into the matter for you, your Majesty," she said at last, "I think I will be able to advise you on a place to start. Until then, I bid you goodnight your Majesty."

They had already arrived outside the doors, as the elderly woman opened it for her.

"Ah… right… thank you…" Historia said, blinking a few times at how smoothly that had gone, "… thank you… thank you…"

"And please try not to forget the names of more important people than me when it comes to meeting them," the woman then called her out, causing Historia to almost buckle as she entered through the door, fearing that she had been caught out.

"Ah, um –" Historia wished to ask it, confessing the suspicion that the elder woman had hinted at.

"Adrianna Eisenhauer, your Majesty," the aforementioned woman cut the young Queen off mid sentence helpfully.

'Oh... that was it... Adrianna Eisenhauer,' Historia's mind berated herself with the familiarity of it. 'Adrainna Eisenhauer. Adrinna EisenHuer. Ad... Adriinna EigenHorer... A... Anna...? Icy howler?'

It wasn't a particularly difficult name, but the way that the elder woman pronounced it with an accent that Historia had never heard before, made it sound all the more unusual to her.

Historia thought she was generally okay-okay with names. Or… at least Krista was… Either way, Historia knew that the cat was out of the bag… but still decided to try and try and pretend otherwise and get the bad impression of her shoulders.

"E… Eh?" Historia caught herself, "I… assure you Mrs Eig… enhorror, I remember your name. I was going to ask about something else… um, like… dinner?"

"You need not to address me by any title like that, your Majesty. Rather I prefer that you wouldn't given our profession. Also I am unmarried. And I will go fetch your personal maid now and bring
it your room," Adrianna said, before at last closing the door. "Also, please do not say 'Eh?' so casually, your Majesty."

The door closed, as 'Not-Mrs-Icicleholder-But-Miss-Eleventhouser-But-Not-Miss-Eyesboulder-Because-Circumstances-And-Now-Not-Giving-A-Actual-Idea-What-To-Call-Her-Lady' shut the delicate wooden door, and left Historia in her now candlelit room.

"… Eh?… oh…. Okay..." Historia said after she was left alone in her room again. She crept through it again, noticing that someone had been inside to clean up.

She looked at the room again, just like she did in the morning,

'Too big... much too big...' her thoughts had not changed in the slightest, and she doubted they would for a while…

A maid entered shortly after, introducing herself before laying out dinner at her table on Historia's request and then lighting the candles for the night, just as Historia tried to assure her that she didn't need to.

Historia decided to turn in early for the night, and the maid as well left the room soon after. Her bed had been made sometime in her absence and the drawers were sorted with the clothes neatly folded after her rummaging around in the morning.

Historia fell into the bed, and hid under the covers. It had been awful to her. But, it hadn't been a lost cause either.

It was only the first day.

'Tomorrow... will be better...' she thought, as sleep took her away while the candlelight glittered on, not bothering her in the slightest as they slowly died out through the night.

She had forgotten to ask how to operate the shower…

She didn't sleep well that night.

? of the Year 793

"… a town outside the Walls..." a prisoner in an unknown cell, shoved in the rotting underground whispered to the person behind the opposite bars across the stinking gutterway on the other side, "supposedly, it was built by exiles."

Doubt and hope before an oncoming execution often were the most common opposing responses to a criminal cell, hidden and uncared for by the citizens above.

"It's impossible to escape the Titans and build a settlement, isn't it?" the prisoner continued, sharing the knowledge of the small legend, "but that's not quite true."

The man smirked, now having caught the attention of his only companion in the decaying dungeon.

"Are you aware..." his eyes seemed to glow in the darkness, absolute certainty that at least this part of the story was fact, "... that the Titans supposedly come from the South?"

"South?" his fellow inmate perked up at this.
"I don't know the full details myself," the first prisoner confessed, "but all of the soldiers stationed in Shinganshina district are proof that there are a lot of Titans down there, right? The royal government also softens taxes and what not to make life easier for the residents there."

The two discussed further, everything which pointed to the South.

The origins of the Titans?

"It means... if you get banished, go North," the first prisoner advised.

The time of their execution was coming soon. Being thrown out through the gates of Wall Maria into Titan territory. That was their punishment as the gates closed behind them.

Hope fabricated on the foundation of an old story, in a place where there was nothing else to cling their hope on.

To the North. Far away from the opposite directions Titans came from.

"And North... is where Naraka is?"

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 - Day 2 of Being a Queen**

Historia had woken up, a headache threatening to split her head open for some vague reason. That had been a weird dream. It felt like it was neither memory, nor from Eren, nor from Frieda.

She hadn't seen any memories from her half-sister before, only vague remembrances from Eren and how he mentioned the woman who looked alike to her, only hair in the colour of the night.

They still hadn't spoken about that in proper, and Historia could only assume what this was by connecting the dots.

She hadn't spoken much at Eren at all about the things that they needed to...

Historia wanted to see him as soon as possible again. Instead of any news of a friend's arrival, she was instead met with the smack in her nose, this time making her bleed slightly, as she had walked face forward into the bathroom doors which opened outwards only, just like the day before.

Already, it felt like the previous day was repeating, only the toil building it up to be worse than before. She had frantically cursed as she had stood before the shower and only then remembered the various gauges that she had no idea how to use.

She tried again, turning slowly as she listened to the creaking sound of water traveling through pipes. It was hardly more than a trickle, so she turned slightly more, and then a flood started gushing down on her, making her eyes burn ever since after looking through the water as best as she could.

She was going to find the person who invented it, and she would not rest until she did.

She had walked out, stumbled naked onto her covers and causing them to be wet, decided to just use them as a towel.

They were completely changed, and the maid had told her it would be done everyday, just like the sheets of any other palace officials who resided in thee great halls and had rooms as a second
accommodation away from home.

She would have been more careful as she didn't want to create extra work for her maids, but the maid had refused to relent, saying how they were always done daily for as long back as they were doing their own chambermaiden training.

"Please focus on your lesson, your Majesty," Adrianna's voice sternly warned her. Historia sat up at the table in a large hall of an office.

"R-Right..." Historia settled back into focus, and looked down on the parchment before her.

She was practicing her hand writing.

That was it.

Specifically, just trying to write out her name in smooth curly letters of an elegant hand as befitting of a Queen.

As soon as she awoke, the maids, now numbering four, had sorted out her clothes, and done her hair in a regal bun for her.

After that, she had immediately arrived for her morning lessons.

Historia didn't know what age most people would be normally practicing writing their name, but Historia couldn't help but feel embarrassed at how she would find herself still doing so at the age of 15.

She relaxed as best as she could, trying to ease a smooth cur –

"Ah..." Historia gulped, as one of her letters came out way too large and out of shape compared to the other ones before it.

Time to retry.

This was now the something over 200th attempt.

She had yet to complete one signature to satisfy the standards of her secretary. The assistant playing the part of the leader to the boss.

"Damn..." Historia muttered under her breath, as she started midway to be way too wonky. It completely fell apart this time round.

So she tried again.

About half an hour later, at least she pulled off what she thought was a neatly written signature. Her hands were sore from trying all different angles and moving around to try different quills from the drawer at the side of the room.

She was far too exhausted for a such a simple task, and hoped expending all the focus for the day had been devoted to this small task.

Hiding any sign of relief and moving properly as she had been asked to practice as well whenever she was moving around in public.

She walked over slowly, and placed the piece of paper in front of her aide, who inspected it briefly. She was quite for a while until –
"Please try to keep the curls more succinct and leave the mark on the 't' alone without joining, and do not press down so hardly on the paper in case the ink seeps through the back," Adrianna replied back strictly. She seemed to fuss over everything but..., "... You did a good job this time round though."

Historia blinked and smiled suddenly from her moment of disappointment once more, pleased that at last after a couple hours, she was making some progress forward. And then –

"Now try writing it 100 times over like that please, your Majesty," the woman then requested. Another 100 times over what took her 2 hours to do once...

Historia nodded simply, understand in the need of it, though naturally displeased to spend the whole morning like that followed by an another afternoon of the blasted meetings.

The afternoon came with Historia managing another 20 or so approved copies after getting the hand of the style, and then the meetings started again.

The decrees which Historia had signed had gone through, published in various books which detailed the way in which the aristocracy was cleansed. The purges displaced even more central figures in human society than had died in the rebellion.

Or so, that was what Historia was told.

That was mainly what she did at all. Be told what to do, while she listens and follows her instructions.

The topic was at least moving on now from punishments to more technological developments. Historia didn't have any particular interest on ant topic like that, but it was no doubt an improvement from the previous day's discussion.

"It has been discovered that the interior military police, which had been ordered to wipe out signs of technological innovation, has in fact preserved research records in secret, opening the door to new and better weapons..."

The lead official began the meeting again.

It all happened the same way. Historia struggling to control her frustration for the constant 8 hours which they 'discussed' over.

Praises, disappointments, compliments and doubts constantly mixed in and out.

Again and again.

It went on and on with Historia struggling to sit through and watch it all.

She didn't utter a word this time.

Historia just sat there, playing the role of the observer as she was meant to.

And that's all she did.

Yet every second was painful, feeling as if she would faint from tiredness at any moment now.

She just hoped... these things would end soon...
Late Winter of the Year 842 – Within Wall Sina

"Kenny… not long in the future, this world… will be ruined."

"I want to create a Paradise… for the surviving, waning remnants of humanity."

... 

"God-like power. Everyone who gets their hands on it seems to turn compassionate. Would the same thing happen to garbage like me?"

"I got to know. I want to know… what's it feel like?"

"What does it look like from up there?"

"Can a piece of trash… like me… ever see the same kind of thing that you can see?"

... 

"Sure, I… don't want to die… And… I want power… but…"

"…Oh…"

"…I think… I just got it… why he did that…"

"Every last person I've seen… was the same way…"

... 

"They couldn't keep going… unless they were drunk on something."

... 

"They were all… slaves to something… even him."

... 

"What about you?"

"… Eren Jaeger?"

Early Fall of the Year 850 - Day 3 of Being a Queen

She smacked herself on the bathroom doors again that morning, but managed to not give herself a nose bleed this time.

Historia had made sure to ask the maids on the night before, who were now numbered to a dozen as her personal attendants to show her how to operate the damn machine.

The Queen was not going to forgive the inventor anytime soon. A combination of top most to the left, then bottom most to the left, then the stupid pattern continued and had to be repeated before the water would start flowing.

She ended up tearing her night gown as well at some point. As it turned out, it was a child's one and the only one that was really around her size, albeit a bit small.
Her maids had set to work on searching for clothing more suitable for her size, but until then, she had to remain content with sleeves overflowing past her completely.

She took her lessons again, writing her signature, speaking properly, moving around regally, sitting style, expressions, wearing the crown properly – she never understood how this ended up being a whole lesson, but it was more difficult to balance on her head than it would seemed at first.

However, it wasn't all tough work and suffering in silence.

Compared to the usual two meals a day in training camp, she always ate three now, and could have extras whenever she pleased.

Rich desserts, carefully procured meats, the finest dishes throughout the kingdom – essentially the true heaven for Sasha.

She wanted to bring them all someday. There was far too much food for her alone. One day, she would like all of her friends to eat together in shared companionship.

All… of her friends… all of her friends… all of Krista's friends…

Her mood would sometimes turn sour after that, uncertain of how to place all of her remaining comrades right now.

Comrades…

She wasn't exactly that anymore either.

She was no longer a member of the Survey Corps, and her only affiliation is through the military as the figurehead of it and the monarchy on the face of it.

The meetings began again, last all afternoon and into the evening as usual.

Again and again, the same rabble would comment on this and that and push their own desires as much as they could.

Then something of interest had come to their attention.

"The shining stones in the cavern beneath the Reiss family grounds, supposedly created by the Titans… seem to provide a so far seemingly limitless energy," one of the MPs commented, reading off what had been written on the report.

The investigation to the underground Reiss chapel. The place where she found herself.

Where the rituals had been completed for a century and where her half-sister had died.

"We can have mining operations begin and hire people from the area. Winter is slowly approaching, but once the rural workers have completed their harvests, we can employ them to work in preparation before the snow comes in," another men, one of the couple that Historia didn't have any proper bad feelings against, suggested.

Technological improvements. Increasing the advancement of a society.

Growing and growing.

"Manufacturing facilities should be prioritized. We will have them lit day and night. This should improve our productivity greatly," another said.
Historia still had yet to learn the names of these men, though she didn't feel any particular rush to do right now.

"Now… if only we could find more spots like this?" one of the MPs stroked his beard greedily, dreaming of the possible profit they might have if further caverns alike to the Reiss family’s existed in the walls.

"There are other uses of the light which we can invest in, such as…” the conversation trailed off again.

Historia’s small hope that they might discover something else about the strange formations was not reached.

Once more again, she dined alone in her room where she ate all of her meals in private, thanked her servants who gave the typical ‘I’m unworthy of your praise‘ response.

Every day… would every day of the rest of her life be… like this?

She sighed as she decided to shower, finding she had the strength today at least to give it one last try. She managed this time at least, and finished off with changing into her nightwear and resting in the covers.

Again and again. A routine that had already been built for just the first three days.

The room… it wasn’t just too big…

It was too characterless…

No style, no decorations, no feeling in it…

Much too… characterless…

A callback to how she was in the past.

She was not going to eve go back to being that girl again.

---

People fleeing their homes due to the appearance of the Titans.

Unable to match the overwhelming force of the Titans, humanity was forced to sail to a new world. At this time, most of humanity had been annihilated, but the majority of this was at the hands of their fellow humans.

Those who gained passage aboard the ships were only a small fraction composed of the rich and powerful.

The voyage was rough; about half of the ships vanished without reaching the other shore.

In the new world, great walls had previously been prepared.

This new continent, we shall revere as sacred.

Within these walls are the ideals of humanity.

Within these walls, let us create a world eternally without strife.
Early Fall of the Year 850 - Day 5 of Being a Queen

But then…

The thing which she wanted to know most about…

The news finally reached them.

"Now, in order to build up a public budget for future expenditure…” The topic of the meeting had been stated first again, naturally yet another subject that Historia would have to fiddle her head around.

She had grown used to listening in on the bits that she needed to and letting the council run itself.

More often now, she was signing off forms and various other propositions during this time that her aide brought to her for approval.

Her name was already on over a hundred responses. The weight of an individual peace of parchment was minuscule. And yet, it seemed to build up ever so quickly.

"But first of all, we have a report. We have just received a report from the Survey Corps. Section Commander Hanji Zoe has provided us with updates on the progress towards the operation to reclaim Wall Maria." The atmosphere changed immediately as the topic changed, looking towards the future and the fate of everyone in this room and the rest of the Walled world.

This operation. Everything hinged on it.

And she… would never again be able to take part in it… she would never go off riding on horseback out through the gates into hell again…

"Eren Jaeger has now gained the Titan hardening, now giving us the means to block the ruined gate of Shinganshina District,” the official surmised.

The reclamation of Wall Maria.

The news was received with tremendous approval.

The time was gradually drawing near.
Eren would be the centre of this operation, the one who would take back the lost territory. The home which had been stolen away from him.

The Survey Corps would go out and risk their lives, and put everything into it.

While she...

Was confined here.

They would charge on together, and they would have each other's backs.

But she could not follow them anymore.

Would she have joined the Survey Corps even if she wasn't forced to?

Historia didn't know. Krista joined the Survey Corps since she obeyed whatever was told of her.

No. That wasn't the question she should be asking.

'Do I want to go back...?' Historia asked herself.

...

'No...' she decided, '... I wouldn't be able to do anything as just another soldier...'

There was no future for her there.

She knew where she wanted to go, where the next destination along the road was.

But still...

Historia realised it for the first time in a different light, not as the soldier being sent off, but the people awaiting their return.

One expedition after another. Their numbers would decrease one by one.

If... next time...

   a  l  y  a  o  t  e  r  ?

It had been left alone in the emptiness for so long.

It looked as if it was part of the emptiness itself, a great dark mass that was covered in glitters of the light which once shone on it, and coated in its being.

Not a muscle of it had moved for a millennia.

It had been there for so long that it would surely be dead by now.

Yet slowly, the great serpent's eyelids began to stir, jerking ever so slightly up and down, seen only by the darkness which seemed more alive than the great serpent itself...

______________________________________________________________

Early Fall of the Year 850 – The Day After / Day 6 of Being a Queen

On the next day, Historia woke up again in the great room, still not used to the great space all
around her. She wasn't used to anything at all even though the first week was nearing the end.

Historia wanted to dive back under the covers and sleep off the day, but slowly got up anyway.

She had a dream to accomplish.

She didn't know when she would be able to start implementing the changes she needed, but she would have to bear with it and continue waiting patiently for when the military would give her clearance.

Her aide, Adrianna had mentioned that she will have a meeting in a few weeks, once the military believes that it is safe from any revolts from the nobles.

A month's time seems to be agreed as the likely duration of this period of unease.

Three more weeks….

Historia got up as usual – she was still banging her nose on the bathroom door everyday, albeit with much less force now.

She arrived in the office hall soon after having breakfast, where her lessons would usually take place, To her surprise, Adrianna was not present in the room, like she had so far always been before her last minute arrival, ready to scold her.

Historia moved around the room, to the desk at which she would usually work at, a stack of paperwork ready for the afternoon.

She should probably get started. First up…

… More handwriting practice.

The wooden chair and desk, finally crafted and cut from expert hands, created with no erroneous cuts nor any splinters sticking out.

Perfected by practice.

Historia glared at something that hadn't yet been.

And she cried inside at how weird she felt again while just copying out the same letters and screwing up the curly handwriting she was required to do.

She had been doing so for about 10 minutes when the doors opened and her aide walked in, facial expression taunt and strict as ever.

Historia stood up from her chair as her supervisor quickly closed the distance like a shark seeking blood.

"Good morning your Majesty," the lady spoke formally as always, bowing clearly and confidently to the Queen just like on every morning.

"Good morning Adrianna," Historia replied, nodding her head at her, signaling the balance of authority to any would-be onlooker.

At least on the surface.

"Your Majesty, there won't be any lessons for you today," the aide explained much to Historia's
secretly pleasant surprise, "you have a visitor this morning."

The news suddenly alerted the Queen as it occurred to her that she had not yet had private conferences nor visitors so far. Dealing with the nobility, well wishers, and no doubt proposals of various sorts, was the sort of thing Historia imagined would be more commonly dealt by the Queen.

"I-Is it going to –! I mean…” she calmed herself and took forth the regal form again. The Queen breathed out just as practiced and spoke formally without stuttering, "whom will I be seeing today?"

"Eren Jaeger from the Survey Corps."

– That was her answer.

Why was it that her mood improved instantly the moment she heard that?

Her body felt rejuvenated and focused again, the beating in her ears of a unique happiness that she could not place, but knew she had somehow longed for through cloudy nights of starlight.

Although she had been working closely with her supervisor and teacher Adrianna, she had not truly seen someone she was truly comfortable around for the past week.

A friend.

The closest person at her side.

That was Eren.

How could she not feel so happy after what they had been through?

"I will take you to the entrance where he waits," the elder woman said, "please follow me, your Majesty."

Historia nodded and quickly proceeded after the lady as she opened the door for her. They both proceeded down the hallways, leading to the front of the palace, the guards opening and closing the doors at every point.

She really wished that people didn't do that, but as the Queen, they kept doing it for the sake of appearances.

It felt like –

"Your Majesty, please do not walk like a prancing pony and hide your eagerness a little," the aide called as Historia finally took notice.

She had practically been skipping and jumping off every step lightly like a happy little child after learning to walk.

"Y-Yes, sor–" Historia cut her words off, and then redefining her face once more, nodding slightly in acknowledgment.

She walked in the way expected of her for the remainder of the walk to the room, the doors of the entrance hall and guest waiting room opened by another pair of guards.

Historia realised how she had been generally cooped up in the same section of the palace for the
past several days. She had gone out to walk in the gardens but had always remained on the palace grounds, surrounded by a wall and patrolling sentries.

She hadn't been into this room before but felt it was decorated more lavishly than most others.

Historia didn't care about that. Though she couldn't say she outright hated the look of jewelry, finely maid dresses and other such valuables, her interest in them was severely lacking compared to many other people.

The stuff which made her heart beat, her body feel free and her soul get captivated.

It was a simple, honest relationship with her closest remaining friend.

He was now dressed in a military trenchcoat, his cape and regular jacket being replaced for general wear after the achievements attributed to the Survey Corps just after her own coronation.

Yet Eren looked no different regardless of what medals or awards he was wearing.

What was different however, was the aura around him.

It was alive and beating once more from the day in the ave.

It had already been regrowing during the battle at Orvud district, but the air around him felt like it was made of steel just like ever before.

He was back.

The moment the Queen entered the room, a great weight of unknown worry lifted of her now that she saw Eren was back.

Eren was back…

… Yet it felt that this was a completely different person who had taken on the will and identity of 'Eren Jaeger'.

But… it was undeniably the person who Historia was so happy to see.

His eyes turned to meet her as she entered the room. He had been standing around gazing at the various paintings around the room that Historia could not care for right now.

It had basically been a week since they last saw each other.

Left with nobody familiar by her side for a week and now met with the most familiar person, she wanted to rush out and embrace him.

But their positions would not allow that here.

Eren's face lit up when he saw her as well, walking in with a beaming smile of her face.

Just like she would often do in the past as 'Krista'.

Except this time, the action was truly real. It wasn't her first, but it was of but a small number.

Had it really only been 3 weeks ago when Ymir finally helped her break down Krista?

Queen Historia walked elegantly forward to a soldier who had sworn his heart to serve her along
with the rest of the military on the day of her coronation.

And it was Eren who brought Historia up and supported her.

Already possessed by that feeling again, she had stepped right in front of him as he himself approached her, both stopping in their tracks.

Eren bowed towards her shortly, having already picked up on the formalities that they both needed to follow in public.

Historia dipped her head slightly in acknowledgment as Eren raised his own head and did the military salute with his hand dedicating his heart to her.

They didn't need any greetings to each other.

A clash of ocean and sky with grass and woods.

The exchange between their eyes was all they needed, openly exposing their own feelings to each other.

They were telling each other how glad they both are that the other is here now.

Simply being together even if for a brief time, that's all that they wanted right now and all that mattered right now.

They smiled at each other.

And smiled.

And smiled.

Until the elder woman, forgotten by the two, coughed again.

"Ah- Welcome to the royal palace Mr Jaeger," Historia said at last, talking how she was expected to when that scrutinizing look was drilled into her.

"Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule on my behalf, your Highness," Eren played along for appearances sake.

"I hope that your passage here was pleasant," she continued with the formalities, "are you not being accompanied by any of your squad as protection?"

"Yea– I mean, yes your Highness. Hors– Jean has traveled with me but has other matters to attend to." That was a half-lie on Eren's part. They had an unusual ride to the capitol together with Jean whining about being stuck with him until he began asking about what he will be watching him and Historia doing. And then the conversation got more… wrong.

'Historia doesn't need to know about me ditchi– losing that bastard… ' Eren decided. He did feel a bit sorry for Jean right now. But he knew it would be worse with Jean just being there.

Eren could imagine what it would be like with a talking horse staring at the two of them while they don't even know what to do.

"I see," Historia nodded subtly as she looked at her aide to her side, signaling that she was dismissing the older lady nicely.
The woman nodded while gesturing a careful reminder to the Queen on her lessons. The elder lady then left down the entrance of the palace and quickly disappeared from sight.

"This way please Mr Jaeger, I'll lead you to a meeting room," the Queen waved him over and through the doors which two guards moved to open at her approach.

They were back in the hallway which Historia had come from, this time with a different companion and going the opposite direction.

The Queen walked silence while the soldier observed the whole passageway and examined the view from the windows, locking the layout of all the courts, buildings and gardens into a layout plan in his head.

They turned the corner and entered the second hallway which connected most of the rooms that Historia used, connecting two buildings together that had been built at separate times.

"Shouldn't you have a personal guard with you at all times, your Majesty?" Eren had suddenly leaned in from behind her out of nowhere.

"Hm. I am already in the capable hands of one of my finest soldiers, am I not?" the Queen smirked and responded, "besides, I was allowed to move escorted within the palace. If the military can't even keep the palace secure from intruders then it wouldn't reflect the reliability of the new government well."

"New government? I heard that the monarchy has been restored now that the true royal family has succeeded the thrown, your Majesty," Eren picked up and decided to mock her a little, leaving the hint for her.

"Oh that would be correct, I suppose. An illegitimate child being handed a title that's not hers by law. But I can still punish people for new crimes that I can have approved," Historia exaggeratedly put her hand under her chin in thinking expression. She stopped walking as Eren did the same and arched her head over her shoulder to look at him, "here's one I'm thinking of – a dozen punches each time someone calls me 'your Majesty' mockingly, knowing full well they can call me 'Historia' when alone."

"U-Um, what a great idea… your Majesty," Eren hesitated before muttering under his breath before seeing Historia raise her hand into a fist.

"That'll be a dozen, stand still Jaeger," Historia gave a menacing smile, somewhat similar to someone else from that past and the first punch into his stomach.

"W-Wait Historia, that law hasn't been approved yet right?" Eren held his hands out and caught her fist easily as Historia started battering both his arms playfully, "t-that's an abuse of your pow–"

‘They still hurt…’ Eren whimpered in his head as the Queen gave him a dozen light hits with a smile on her face before finally stopping and looking up to his face with a smug look.

She lowered her head and huffed a little. She had had a lot of bottled down stress over the week with how much she wanted to hit some of the officials awake.

"I-I know I encouraged y-you to do it on the Captain, but um…" Eren tried to explain and find an excuse, "but well… you can go easier on those you call your friends…"

A friend.
A friend that she would turn her back on everything for.

"Thanks for coming to see me, Eren," Historia said at last, locking eyes with him next to the window.

Outside the sky seemed clearer than it had been the whole week and the air just a little fresher despite a tinge of the smell of something burnt coming from somewhere.

"Yeah. I'm glad I could, Historia," Eren replied earnestly, scratching the back of his head as was becoming a habit when around her, returning the smile.

Two birds which had been scavenging the royal courts for food had landed on a nearby outcropping roof that gave them full view of the two humans through the window on the fruitful morning.

Before the smaller of the two birds stole a seed that the larger had found below the acorn tree an hour ago.

It took of flying to the nest with the bigger bird squawking and chasing after it in the ocean reflected world.

"So… Eren… why are you actually here?" Historia finally asked, neither of them noticing the swift chase outside.

Eren sharply turned to her and breathed before giving her an unusually serious expression even for him, which Historia felt was unusual.

Had he really come on some very urgent matter?

"I came to touch you."

"…"

That was all Eren said.

The two of them, and the whole world itself seemed to stop frozen in time, with only one of the two to get it running again.

She waited.

She waited for him to say something else.

But he didn't.

"…" Historia said simply, dumbfounded by what she just heard. "… E...h?"

More silence followed.

And then some more.

"Y... Y... ou... c... ame... t...o..." Historia began to lose it as an odd image came to her from the start of the week, destroying all other thought processes.
She was losing her head.

There was no way Eren had just said that.

She must have been imagining it.

"Wait! N-No, I didn't come to literally touch you! B-but well, touching you is involved, b-but –?!" Eren suddenly grasped what he said, turning a shade of red to match the girl's as he began panicking inexplicably.

"S-S-So rephrase t-that?" Historia gasped out, slowly calming herself. She felt like steam was coming out of her face at the image she just imagined.

Eren touching her.

Touching her.

Touching…

She tried to drive away the thought but couldn't stop imagining it to herself. Historia, pinned against the wall as Eren had his arms blocking her movements to either side.

Eren touching her.

His breath in her face and so close that she could hear his own heart beat.

Eren touching her.

Leaning in, so close with only a few centimeters between their faces.

Eren touching her.

He would then bring one of his arms up and hover them above her chest before continuing his journey upwards.

Eren touching her.

His hand above a certain sacred spot n her face, which had never been touched before by anyone else except her sister on affectionate instances.

This was Eren though. This wasn't a sister, but a friend doing such a thing…

If Eren was about to touch her like that, then… it would mean…

One of his fingers extended out and lowered it itself towards the pure, soft and sensitive skin that built up her…

And before she knew it, imaginary Eren would boop her forehead.

Eren touching her.

He would steal away the maiden virginity and be the first person to ever boop her forehead with his finger.

Eren touching her.

Her previously untouched forehead would be touched for the first time.
Eren touching her.

Eren touching her forehead.

The steamy image of it was far too embarrassing.

Still… if it was Eren… she wouldn't mind him being the first to boop her forehead, but only as friends, nothing more.

Eren touching her forehead's soft skin with his own delicate and tender finger and just giving her a poke.

Historia thought about how the first boop on her forehead had to be from someone special.

At least that's what Frieda told her.

Someone special…

What else was it that her elder half-sister had said in her regained memories?

"If the special someone boops your forehead, they must also take responsibility for it! Remember Historia, booping someone's forehead is a very big step in a relationship and you only do it when you're old enough and only if that special someone is ready to devote everything to you!" Frieda has said in Historia's recalled memories.

Someone special…

Eren was a special friend to her, that part was undeniable.

Take responsibility for it…

Old enough…

Ready to devote everything to me…

'It's t-too early…' Historia mentally decided. Eren touching her. Eren booping her forehead. It was too early for that…

"Y-Yeah sorry, l-let me start again!" Eren managed to finally snap her out of her daydream of embarrassment.

'This is all Jean's fault!' He cursed the brunet to horse hell.

"N-No t-touching my forehead," Historia spoke out and interrupted Eren to get the message across.

"Y-Ye… w-wait, what?" Eren stopped suddenly, repeating the line in his head.

"Y-You're not allowed to b-boop my forehead… until we're older…" Historia reiterated, pointing to her delicate and pure forehead.

"…"

Eren expressed his absolute confusion openly as he gaped forward at her, not knowing how she made that sort of confusion along the line.

"O-Oh… you're not here t-t-to… b-boop my f-forehead?" Historia verified. Eren shook his head in
response before she breathed out in relief. "S-So, um… you… could you rephrase that…?"

"Yeah, sorry…" Eren restarted after an awkward cough, "... I was just… thinking about it on the whole journey here… and I guess… I came to touch you'… sort of… kind of just slipped out. It would be weird to say it outright, so I spent the whole time thinking about how I will touch you, and then… I didn't find anything else say…"

"Y-Yes, and that's exactly what you said to me…?" she queried in response.

"R-Right, so I didn't know how to phrase it… and it just slipped out…" he repeated himself and let the sentence dribble in as he lost his thoughts until he regained himself once more, "... u-um, sorry… I'm… I'm here because Hanji sent me to try and help me see more memories!"

He felt like he wanted to go back in time. Eren just wanted to flee back to the past and redo this whole encounter.

It could have come out worse. Eren thought. He still blamed Jean.

"O-Okay, why didn't you just say you've come to…" Historia tried to think up of a more suitable phrasing, "... like, um… that you came to do experiments with me…?"

"..."

"I-Is… that really better?" Eren pondered, seriously with a questioning look.

"A-Ah not like that! Um… I mean…" Historia realised her blunder as her whole body heated up at what she said, "... you could have just said you just wanted to visit me…"

The words suddenly sounded becoming lonely very quickly.

She hadn't meant them to.

But Eren had already prepared himself to hear them.

"I did come to visit you," Eren firmly ensured, "but well… I guess I should have said that instead… It took me a while to get permission for it… and…"

"Yeah… I know… its difficult now that I'm staying here…" Historia acknowledged their circumstances.

A soldier visiting the Queen whenever he pleased.

It was not something possible in either public or private given how both were required to attend to many things.

… Unless they are purposefully putting aside the 'duties' prescribed to them.

They both shelved the shared thought for later.

"Yeah… I wanted to see you sooner, but with everything that's going on right now, I was made to do my Titan experiments first and only got permission once section commander Hanji decided to take a break for today..." Eren explained. He seemed to give of a light chuckle, "... but you know that I was thinking about you for the whole time during the hardening experiments and while resting…"

"Ah, no… I didn't mean it like that!" Historia explained, wishing not address what Eren just said
last, "I know its really important for you especially, I just…"

Eren rubbed the back of his head suddenly.

She looked up at him, as he told her that he didn't need to hear any apology even if she was just trying to be courteous.

They didn't need to be like that to each other.

They saw each other completely exposed in the shimmering lights of the world.

They could be as true as they wanted to each other.

"Thank you," she managed at last, giving him a pure, genuine, unfaked smile, "thanks for coming to see me…"

"Yeah… you're welcome…" Eren returned it as they both shared the moment.

They didn't even need to say that to each other.

But they wanted to do so anyway.

Eren noticed that he had accidentally messed up a few hairs from her royal bun hairstyle, and tried to tuck them in without Historia noticing.

Queen Historia didn't wear the crown.

She brushed his hand of gently, rolled her eyes and grabbed his forearm, leading him down the hallway once more, this time side by side completely.

"Anyway, shall we go somewhere more proper?" Historia asked, beginning to lead him away to her bedroom.

They went up one smooth incline of flooring, leading them up to the third floor towards the back of the palace.

The main entrance to the main palace itself was on the first floor, the entry staircase taking any visitors up to it.

They had already gone up another sloped incline, acting as stairs earlier after just leaving the entrance, though with how much of a slow incline it was, Eren hadn't even noticed until he looked down through the window on the way.

Kitchens and other worker facilities and quarters were down on the ground floor, then the meeting, gathering and dining rooms were on the first floor.

One floor above, was where all the office work was done, council were held and all the administration officers operated. The third floor only extended at the back of the palace, where Historia's room was completely at the rear of, and only extended to a several empty bedrooms and personal rooms that held other equipment.

Of course that was only generally speaking as there were several outcropping buildings and also some unconnected ones which Historia did not know what was being done there.

It was about a 10 minute walk to get through the great halls and back to her bedroom again. She would probably have been expected to take him to one of the privates rooms reserved for her and
her guests.

Instead she decided to take Eren straight to the royal bedchamber, not considering any implications of what that sight might say.

Queen Historia found her two most trustworthy guards stationed at the door to the quarters as they were meant to be. The second had only be assigned the day before, and like his other deep sleeping companion, was dozing off as Historia came upon them.

"So…” Eren looked at them unimpressed, even genuinely annoyed once more, "these are your personal bodyguards?"

"Yep!" Historia confirmed. If she wished to leave the palace then these two were to escort her, however otherwise they would be stationed at her quarters, keeping an eye out for any intruders and checking on the maids entering in and out.

The best of the best.

In the mornings, the guards would be awake as they knew the time around when Historia would leave her room and when her aide would arrive, so they only needed to keep an eye out then. Otherwise, Historia always found them napping.

Historia clapped her hands once, and snapped the newer soldier out of his gaze, shaking his head. He seemed to mutter under his breath as he immediately stood to attention like nothing was wrong.

His other companion, the soldier who had been napping there since Historia's first day, remained in his deep sleep.

"Ahem, I am in the safe hands of Mr Jaeger, the hope of humanity," Historia gestured to the very annoyed Titan shifter beside her that the entire military knew, "you may leave us, I do not require any further protection for this morning."

The guard nodded after a little pause and then moved sidewards to nudge his companion. Who didn't wake. The guard nudged him again, this time in the stomach which managed to finally wake the other man awake.

Not bothering any further, Historia proceeded to open the door to her room, and usher Eren in, just as the professional guards left, groggy from a lack of sleep somehow.

The two MPs helped each other as they went down the corridor without a second glance nor care about the two men's task.

"And those two are really –" Eren began, struggling to understand how the MPs could run like this sometimes.

"Yep," Historia answered quickly, beaming mockingly to the two that left.

"The bes-" he said again.

"Yep," and Historia cut him off once more. She closed the door behind him, as they were left in the now unsupervised room of the palace.

Eren sighed, rubbing his head before choosing not to comment further and decided to look around immediately through the whole place, making the same observations that Historia did on the first
day.

In short, he came exactly to the same conclusion that Historia did. He knew that she no doubt felt the same way about it.

The room was far too big. Historia's bedroom was far too big.

Historia's bedroom.

Bedroom.

Eren was in a girl's bedroom for the first time.

'Historia... should I... really be in here...?\' Eren quizzed her internally, seeing her make no response.

She wandered around her room, expectantly as if waiting for Eren to make a move.

No, it wasn't like that. Eren slapped himself silently and decided that Historia had only pure thoughts with bringing him here.

It was just her bedroom. There was no implication of him being brought to a friend's bedroom.

"So, um, shall we do it on the bed?" Eren innocently asked, then suddenly added, "n-not that! I didn't mean it like that..."

"Yeah, I got that..." Historia nodded cautiously, realising only now how much she had suddenly been sweating a bit at some point.

She first took a seat on the opposite side from the corner she would usually sleep by. She patted the spot next to her left as Eren came to sit down there.

"Okay, how do we start the... touching...?" Historia hesitated, brain not functioning, and not knowing what else to do.

"Um, well..." Eren scratched his cheek, "when two people are okay with each other very, very much... they don't mind if the their skins make contact with another, so um..."

"I know what touching means!" Historia insisted back, red as a volcano about to burst at this point, "... just what do we begin by touching..."

"Well, I guess we'll..." Eren thought about it carefully. The conditions were just to 'touch', and they had nothing else to go on, "... hold... hands?"

"EH?! Why didn't you just say that from the start?!" Historia bubbled again. Eren gave her a shrugging look, telling her that he only thought up of it now, "... well, okay..."

Eren turned his body to face her as Historia imitated, then reaching out with his right hand, he grasped Historia's left as she held out as well.

Their hands formed into loose caps as they touched delicately, the difference of temperatures changing so quickly.

The difference between their hand sizes was considerable, though not as much as their heights. The feel of it, rough and soft.
Historia's hand was not of a frail maiden like she appeared to many, and her hands displayed some of the hidden strength she had from years of training and constant chores from her past home.

Eren's hand was like the opposite reflection in this case, soft and tender in ways she could not imagine, despite having a clear worn out and compressed strength, there was something pure mixed in.

They both blushed as they awaited the minuscule lightning like spikes that would signal the transference of memories.

Nothing happened.

There was no sparks, nor any odd feelings and most definitely not any memories flowing through the heads of either of them.

A feeling of finding a locked box, with a key that fit the lock yet didn't turn into it.

Eren narrowed his eyebrows, trying to concentrate, like he did with is hardening, to search for something, just as Historia likewise pursued her lips and sought out her own.

Nothing.

Simply nothing.

Their minds were blank, and the only thing running in them was the realisation that nothing was happening and the every spreading peaceful, soothing sensation as the heat between their bodies was being transferred by the contact.

The room around them.
The dancing clouds outside.
The cool breeze gently rustling the leaves.
Clear blue sky and quiet movements in the distant halls and in the courtyard.
The world was around them, in so many details yet the individual in front of them took up the most of it.
Yet there was nothing which they expected.
Nothing.

"That's strange…" Historia broke the silence, looking in wonder at their hands, "… was there something else…?"

"No…" Eren tried thinking back to what Rod had said, "… unless me being in chains has something to do with it…"

"Oh… so you're into that stuff…" Historia tried to diffuse the light panic Eren was on the verge of, and gave him a teasing smirk when he looked at her appalled.

"No, I'm not," he sighed, starting to consider how their Historia seemed pretty eager to jump to 'those' sorts of things, "… but mayb–"

"You'd try it?" she cut in again, trying to play with him some more.
"… You seem pretty insistent at it," Eren caught on this time, smirking in return, "do you like being in charge that much?"

"N-No, ack…" Historia got caught out. her own tactic back firing as it was her turn to lose composure. Next time. Next time, she'll be the one to have the last jab.

Eren pulled his hand away, Historia feeling instantly sad for some reason as he pulled away and looked at it inquisitively.

"Hold on, spread your fingers out," Eren said, stretching out his own right hand as he showed her the shape.

Historia complied and did the same shape, leaving considerable gaps between each one of her fingers just as Eren's own hand approached.

At first he just placed his hand on hers, aligning their fingers together awkwardly. The difference in their hand sizes could now be properly seen, with Historia's fingers barely reached 2/3 of Eren's.

Historia blushed even just a little bit more, however impossible it may have seemed at that point. Body heat now being transferred again,

Warmth which she had never felt before.

It was in her chest as well, beating like never before.

The hot blood from it seemed to be what rushed through her veins and through her face especially.

Yet…

Nothing.

There was no light, only heat.

And…

Maybe…

The hint of the presence of someone else aside from the two of them, watching the whole scene.

"Do you… feel anything?" Eren asked her.

"…" Historia kept her eyes closed, trying to grasp at the odd feeling and whether it was her own or the result of their touching hands. "… I don't know… there's… something… but…"

No memories.

"… Let's try…" Historia took the initiative this time, moving her hand leftways at angle until her fingers were directly above the gaps between Eren's fingers.

She then locked their fingers together, just as Eren got the idea at the same time, with both their fingertips now resting at the back of the other's hands.

They both noticed but tried to ignore it as best they could. The trembling in their hands as shivers of some sensation shot through both of their hands through the arm and to their spine and their entire bodies before shooting back the same way again, just like…
"… Sparks…?" Eren suddenly said, the idea came to him.

Sparks of lightning bolts just as when the Power of the Titans was activated, except running through both their bodies, showing no form and remaining hidden underneath skin, flesh and bone.

An intense feeling that flooded through his nerves around the point where he was touching Historia, feeling unusually sensitive feelings that were perhaps not his own.

"… Do you feel something?" Historia nodded to Eren's question as they both tried to comprehend it, "… hold on, let's touch like this…"

Eren unlocked their fingers from each other and this time gestured Historia to shuffle over into her bed more and kneel with both legs. They held out both hands this time while facing each other and pointing their fingers forward.

Eren then weird cross shape with his arms which Historia imitated and then locked fingers with her once more.

Both their arms crossed, right reaching over left, they were locking opposite hands with each other after swapping opposite directions their arms were pointed.

It was a weird double cross shape that represented an image of an hourglass between the two of them.

And kept holding them like that…

The same feeling felt intensified somewhat, yet still no images came to view after staying like that for a couple of minutes.

"..." Historia then noticed the odd position they were in, "… Eren… wait… what are we actually doing…"

"I… just now…" Eren explained, "just now… it just came to me… something that told me to do… this…?"

He began doubting himself before the Queen's smirk as he dropped his hands and both held hands facing each other once more, locking the sensitive skin of them both together.

They were holding each other as if trying to push the others arms back in an amateurish wrestling match.

They faced each other, most of the time with closed or half open eyes to usher the awkwardness away and focus on their task.

Holding hands that could determine the history of the world…?

...

'What were they actually doing?' was the most frequent thought that anyone in the Walls had on that day.

"Hmm… let's try… this!" Historia suddenly shot up on the flexible bed and pulled Eren up with both their hands still interlocked together face to face.

"Try what?" Eren asked. It was no different from what they were doing before except they were standing now.
There were no sparks or anything, until suddenly –

Historia grinned evilly and spinning him round, she half threw him over onto the bed as his back and head fell on the soft and now messed up covers.

"Ehh, hey, Historia?" Eren struggled, still holding his arms upwards, not expecting the throw at all to come out of nowhere.

The one responsible smirked at him while still having her own hands locked into his, yet using him to rest over her in an odd fashion.

Both their arms outstretched as far as they could, Historia was using Eren's and her own arms as supports to balance on over him.

"Whatever do you mean?" she joked, "your Queen is helping you with these experiments of yours, so she should at least get a comfy position to stay in, right?"

Eren crossed his eyebrows looking at her annoyingly while she smiled in response.

"Very well, your Majesty, here," Eren suddenly let his arms drop and spread them out, causing Historia to lose her supports immediately.

– Then, Eren s –

"Wh- Ouch!" Historia exclaimed as her head fell straight into Eren's chest and pounced, hurting her chin a little.

She had been leaning for too much into him and now her arms had been spread and she had fallen straight down into his chest.

They both blushed at the sudden proximity and Historia tried to slip back a little. But Eren's hands held hers in place and his arms refused to let her move.

"Eren…" she began with a dangerous tone, "this isn't a comfy spot for me."

It was. She was lying through her teeth but felt it wasn't right for her to just be pressing her whole body onto his while they both laid down.

What had even prompted Eren to think that was a good idea?

"Eren… if you don't behave, I'm going into Queen mode again…" Historia tried to warn him. She took notice of how he wasn't moving, and that his eyes were glued upwards to the ceiling. "… Eren?"

…

He breathed out quietly, so small and fragile that she could barely here, but could at least find comfort in the rising and falling of his truly comfy chest.

"… A… falling…" Eren whispered out. Historia was still resting, pressed against his clothed chest but still able to feel his muscles beneath.

She scooted upwards a little, and leaned up to frown at him. Their hands were still connected and Eren's whole expression seemed frozen.

"… Did you just see something…?" Historia shook him a little and called his name under her
breath to try and wake him from the stiff form.

He looked so distant. Like his eyes have caught onto something far away and that it was his only interest right now.

…

And then the look was gone.

"… Historia…?" he examined his surroundings, as if he had forgotten where he was. The blonde girl was still resting on his chest, her legs spread out to the side of his torso but otherwise leaning right above him.

It was a weirdly comforting position but not that either of them minded too much, though were embarrassed by it nonetheless.

"… Did you see someone's memories just now?" Historia asked at last, still maintaining the position until Eren finally dropped his hands and let her go, both scooting out from being pressed at each other.

"Oh… that's right…" Eren recalled.

He had seen it.

Just for a brief moment as he felt like playing with Historia a little to cushion her fall.

"I think I did…" Eren began to doubt the image.

It was brief.

So brief yet utterly mesmerizing.

Just as he let his arms free…

…

Historia looked… like a beautiful falling bird…

An angel? No way.

Eren was certain that it was no angel.

A bird that fell from the sky in the shadow of the golden sun.

Except instead of awaiting for the wind to fly and continue its journey once more, it was ready to flap its wings for the next journey again.

This bird didn't wait for the wind to carry it.

It was traveling in the same direction as the wind, but it was not being pushed by it.

…

He had seen it just now.

He had seen the image of when the bird would fly again ahead into the future.
"… Who's memory was that…?" Eren said aloud, Historia's curiosity now needed to be sated.

He divulged just that to Historia as they sat in the bed together again.

"… A bird… not like a fallen angel, but… just a bird…" Historia repeated after Eren had told her everything he could remember. "No memory of whose…"

"Yeah… nothing else…" Eren confirmed anything that was left to be said.

"… Should we try that again?" Historia suggested after a moment, getting a little red once more at the awkward thought of just… falling on Eren's chest.

Eren shook his head to her surprise, gesturing her over as he stood up on the bed before her as well.

He bounced a little on the wobbly soft mattress below the sheets. And then wobbled some more.

"Let's hold hands again," he said at last, holding both of his out in straight in front as Historia copied him, pressing the palm of their hands together once more.

Eren then took charge, sliding a little to an angle, he interlocked his fingers into the gaps of Historia's hand just as she did the same.

He then tapped. He raised a finger and tapped his finger on the back of her hand. Then he raised another on his other hand and then another followed until all of his fingers were just shifting up and tapping down on her hands and then repeating.

Historia kept her eyebrow quirked at him, bemused as to how serious he looked as he focused on looking at the almost childish contact between their hands.

She responded in turn and all of a sudden, both their hands were just tapping onto each others rythmatically in a butterfly wing like motion.

"… Is this helping you to remember something…?" Historia asked doubtfully despite continuing to copy the strange motion along with Eren.

"… No…" Eren muttered half awake, continuing to simply inspect and check out her fingers. He felt like he was drifting asleep for a moment until Historia suddenly pressed down and squeezed his much larger hands between her fingers, "huh? What's wrong?"

She didn't respond and instead squeezed down harder with a slight smirk.

"H-Hey, ow… Historia…?" Eren whined. It didn't hurt that much really.

"Yes? I'm touching you a bit more, aren't I?" she inquired innocently, "this all part of the experiment on you."

Eren stared at her expressionlessly as Historia began pulling out her fingers from the gaps of his and then lacing them with his once more at random.

He shrugged his shoulders as he began to pull in and out from Historia's as well, both of them touching in a weird mess without any sense or pattern.
They had no idea how to go about discovering any new memories and their little play had dissolved into such a mess of little antics.

They both sighed, secretly content to spend the time with this seemingly childish play. Until Eren decided to flip her over on her back on the bed by twirling her with his hands.

"E-En, what are y—" she gasped out once more at the sudden switch.

"I'm just practicing the experiment," Eren replied. He was on top of her now, legs parted between her waist as he held her down with both hands.

"A-Ah! E-En, p-please me gentle! U-Ah!" Historia started moaning, biting her lip to muffle the sounds, while trying to resist Eren in a light wrestling match. "G-Go easy on me!"

Eren exited her and entered once more, grabbing her fingers once more. Historia desperately tried to push back, but the gap in strength was obvious.

She gasped out her breath as the two shared their smiles, Eren saying he wasn't going to let up his guard anytime soon.

The hot air began to circulate out from their bodies at the light exercise. Eren was still hard, showing no signs of lowering before her presence.

"Eren… let me go already…” Historia warned him, not being able to contend with his strength.

He eventually did, shuffling off her, he cast her a look. "Wanna do it again?"

"Like there's much else we can do," she responded. They continued their intercourse in the pleasurable morning, losing track of time.

The clock ticked away in the corner of the Queen's room. Tick tock – it went just as all clocks did, the hours of their older life falling in tandem with their steps along the old road.

Back to holding hands it was.

3 Hours After Eren Arrived...

The warmth of the other's subtle skin was transferred between them both.

A soft, tender warmth like the flaming hearth on a cold day, glowing in defiance against the harsh winds that would sneak down through the chimney, forcing it to fight back with warm air face to face.

After holding hands for a short while, they got the idea to try imitating the position they were in the cave.

Historia was feeling his back, the trained muscles imbued with a unique strength with her own right hand.

"Um… Historia…” Eren brought her out of her bubble, "… I don't think you were stroking my back last time…”

"H-Huh? T-That's just my sleeve," Historia made up the excuse, shuffling her clothing down her arm a little more in case Eren turned round.
"Oh, right…" he went ahead with what she said, knowing otherwise. His back seemed to already be used to sensing the lightest touch of her hand.

A tick mark might have appeared on his head when Historia seemed to scrape her nails gently across his back, clearly not paying attention to the task at hand.

"Historia… that's not my nape…" Eren reminded her.

"I-I'm just trying your whole spine, y-you never know…" she tried to excuse herself, as her hand traveled down and back up his back.

"R-Right, I guess…" he replied slightly more nervously than he hoped.

Historia felt back along his back again, going all over from the hem of his trousers which were still on, and then back up to the nape of his neck.

She was frankly just lost, feeling Eren's skin in a way that was definitely not odd.

Part of her was admittedly lost in sensation. The strong muscles that he usually kept hidden had caught Historia's attention, even though she was never into this sort of thing, the fact that it was Eren's seemed to make all the difference.

But the greater part of her, just found a different source of comfort. Caressing it gently, she felt like when his back was turned, Eren was much too vulnerable.

He had been betrayed by several of his closest friends in the recent past. All three of them, leaving a blow on him which in the end destroyed him once he fell before her a week ago.

She could feel it within, the pain that his bodies seemed to be in.

The strength that flowed within was digging down, fiercely defending itself in an attempt to protect itself from the fear of being betrayed once more.

That part, Historia was trying to reach out too, caressing it gently, and telling him wordlessly that it would be okay.

That he wasn't going to be betrayed by her, even if humanity would choose that Eren's power was better suited in someone else's hands someday, she would never stab him in the back.

And she wasn't going to let the military even consider it for a second. She trusted them at least to have Eren keep the power, he was after all the one who held the key to the basement beneath Shinganshina district.

It was quite clear – Eren was meant to have this power.

The military wasn't unanimous on this but at least seemed to silently agree on that nonetheless, yet feeling the hidden feelings in his body, she had began thinking.

No. That day would never come.

She would stop it.

She was going to protect her friend, no matter what.

They kept going for half an hour, trying to get any reaction.
"Thank you Historia," Eren said out of the blue.

"Huh? I didn't say anything," she responded, unsure of what he was referring to.

"... It's..." Eren hesitated, as he stood up from Historia's bed, the girl kneeling down on the mattress behind him.

He sighed, and grabbed his shirt, slipping it back on first. "... Being Queen... it's tough on you, isn't it?"

She cut her breath in an instant, turning her thoughts serious once more.

"No really, it's not that bad at all!... what a typical answer Krista would give... 'thought Historia. She wasn't going to hide the truth from Eren.

"It's... different... than I was expecting..." she chose to answer instead, yet truthfully nonetheless.

"...Someone giving you trouble?" Eren's tone flashed a sense of alertness. "Useless guards? Officials? Filthy nobles?

"No. Nobody in particular..." Historia reassured him, taking note on the last one in particular that Eren said in disdain. "At least I don't have to deal with nobles for now... at least until my lessons are over, I don't have to be bothered with dealing with any meetings with anyone for the first month... unless it's the military on urgent matters... like this..."

They both smiled and eased the atmosphere once more, reflecting back to how they spent the morning.

"Historia... you can..." Eren tried once more to convey his meaning.

"I know. I know you're here," she assured him honestly, "It might seem like I'm just playing a role put onto me again... well I guess there is some truth in that. I am playing the role, but if that's what it takes to accomplishing my wish, then I won't regret it."

"But it's not easy to wait for that time to come...?" Eren had assumed as much. Seeing her holding a strong will to her somewhat weighed down body.

"Yeah. It's frustrating and exhausting to wait and do things you don't want to be involved with." Historia hadn't started up well. The very night that she arrived, she had been unable to settle in and find comfort in a room like this. And then that toil had continued on her. "That's what's got me tired as of late... Running up the steep hill, before you can sit in the shade under the tree in the summer like you always wanted, is not as easy as it seems..."

"Yeah... it never is..." Eren agreed. He seemed to recall that phrase from somewhere as well. In a book, somewhere...

Or so he thought before it disappeared again. He had been getting a lot of these feelings since they began earlier. That and he felt his body unusually hot.

"I'm not very good at it..." she commented. She had been struggling a lot and her improvement seemed minimal.

"You're trying hard though, aren't you?" he reminded her. He hadn't been there but he knew it by Historia's true strength.
"I don't know…" Historia's eyes wandered after a half shrug.

"You are," Eren insisted.

"So are you."

…

Historia had noticed the same in him. The weariness caused by pushing on with a refound drive.

"I think… we're both better now at least…" she continued, "… at least… since…"

Compared to that day in the cave, anything really was.

But they did, truly 'feel better'. Something sentient stirring within them like the signs of new life to come into existence.

They were both moving forward now. Slowly, but it was in a straight ahead direction at least.

"Yeah, you're right," Eren agreed.

He was thinking how it was recently when both of them had been dropped into an empty darkness from which they seemed caged and chained down into.

What was it that saved them?

What was it that pulled them out of that?

…

Where was it that they even where now after escaping from that void.

The second step.

The Hope of Humanity and the Ruler of Mankind.

Where do they go from here?

They only had roles to play.

Roles that they weren't fit for. Roles that they didn't fully want. Roles that they could not escape from.

That was fine.

Because they could see something that they did want on the next stop of the road.

Yes.

That was it.

They just needed to keep taking a step after another. A step to the point when they reach what they want from the enslavement they lacked the power and desire to resist.

"When you said that you may be an enemy of humanity… like me… but you were still my friend…" Eren began to reminisce the events of a week ago. "When you were standing over at me… and yelling some sense into me… there was…"
He looked out of the window at the sky to the north east, where the cave would no doubt be being investigated as they speak and mined for its unknown fuels.

A cave made out of Titan hardening crystal.

… Why? Why was it made out of that?

No. That didn't matter right now.

"You're so… so strong… and to think that I once thought of you as the weakest of us all..." Eren directed the conversation onto his friend's uncertain stare. Her beautiful features looking at him just like they were back then, in interest and perplexion.

"I was the weak one…" Eren repeated to her what he truly thought during the battle.

He spilled his thoughts and opened up everything he ha thought of back then.

Yet the point behind them could be explained simply as he did at the end –

"Historia."

"Thank you for everything."

Eren spoke to her without interruption as Historia awaited.

Eren seeing her as weak. There was no way that she could disagree.

Eren seeing her as strong. There was no way that she couldn't feel fuzzy on the inside.

…

Historia eventually decided to turn away, silent for a while.

A minute passed and then 5 minutes after that.

'… Why isn't she saying anything...' Eren thought, trying to think of a way to clear the mood again. Not that the mood was particularly bad at all.

"That day in the cave… there's a lot that happened… a lot that I have to thank you for..." He decided to continue, prodding his friend to finally speak up. "A lot… that I could never repay you for…"

"...Don't..." was all that she said at first after sitting up and then trying to settle down again. "…"

She sighed and stood up, wandering around to the window before turning back halfway to it and sitting down on the side of the bed once more, right next to Eren to the point their arms where brushing against each other.

"... Eren..." she called him, even though he was right beside her.

"... Yeah?" he replied after a short moment.

"We're friends right..." Historia seemed almost sad now, thinking about what that really meant.

"Yeah, of course we are," Eren reassured her, trying to catch a glimpse of her face which she refused.
"Then we shouldn't care about canceling down what we both owe each other or worry about repaying debts," she stated aloud. "There's... so much that I... nor the wealth of this whole palace could ever afford... there's... no way that I could ever repay you..."

Eren nodded knowingly to himself. He chided himself lightly at bringing this topic up.

He hadn't meant to, he only wanted to hear Historia makes some sort of reply.

Historia's piercing gaze seemed intense enough to cause the floor she was looking at to fall beneath the weight of her emotions.

"Thank you... so much... for saving me even as Krista years ago... for reaching out to me after being Historia... and for saving me from that fall... you've saved me... for the worth of more than just one life..." the blonde spoke.

It felt familiar somehow. To moments ago before he first activated the power of the Founding Titan.

Yet completely different all the same.

The relationship between him and her... was completely different.

"I'm sorry for how I made you a promise like that, to get you out of there in the cave and just tossed aside that promise because of my father's words..." Historia divulged once more into her own guilt.

She fiddled with her fingers slightly but continued.

"... I... it's like I told you before... I just wanted to believe my father... and to see my sister again... I..."

She caught sight of Eren's hand about to reach out and comfort her, only to drop again.

She wished he had reached out to her but understood why he stopped.

"... It was... pathetic of me to just forget my promise seconds before... I'm..." she breathed out, stopping Eren's rebuttal and reassurance. "... My father gave the choice... he put that syringe in my hands..."

Instead of transforming her straight into a Titan, he had given it along with a true and honest hope and directed her towards the only sacrifice needed for that along with the rest of humanity.

"In... Orvud district... just after I cut my father down... I saw... I think I saw his memories..." she spoke cautiously. She had given it a fair amount of thought, and had come to a conclusion. "My father did care for the survival of humanity... he was honestly praying for a God to save humanity... and to save him from his grief as well..."

"Eh?" Eren tried to think back to the reports, but nowhere could he remember Historia mentioning anything about this.

Which meant that this was the first time she was revealing it to anyone.

"He wasn't lying... my father truly wished for humanity to be freed... and he truly... mourned for my... mother... when she was killed..." she drew quiet.

Her father had indeed put everything onto her instead of taking the injection himself.
He had been trying to save himself. Along with the rest of humanity as well.

Her father at least… truly hadn't wanted it to turn out like this for her either…

He had handed his last hope onto her.

…

But she chose Eren instead.

How could she not? After all…

"But you didn't listen to your father in the end..." Eren picked up from her, "... you freed me instead..."

"... Of course I did... how could I not?" Historia confessed awkwardly, "... you were... just like me... I feel like... I'm... the same as you..."

Eren never liked Krista.

But Historia... was someone completely different.

"Yeah... You're right," he firmly agreed, "... I feel like... you're exactly right... we're... the same..."

The same type of person.

That was why they could understand each other.

"And that's why, we're friends now right?" Eren said, "... we're friends because of the way we got here now... so... since we're friends... favours and debts shouldn't matter to us... we both... helped each other... we both... freed each other... right?"

Historia turned at him questioningly.

"Let's not... ever say that we owe each other anything," he finished.

She remained quiet. And then, slowly smiled slightly.

Historia simply nodded to Eren.

…

It was settled just like that.

A small unsworn oath of their friendship that was never going to be broken because one like that was so simple for them.

The silence resumed, a lot more comfortable but still not what Eren had hoped to elicit a response on.

"But the thing is... when you called us the enemies of humanity... it was like... I felt something..." Eren started again, taking things with a different turn. He had spent much of the past week pondering on it, "... you changed everything... it was because of you that I took that bottle from you and managed to get where I am now..."
"You're wrong about that one… that's a complete mistake on my part," Historia suddenly jumped in, "I should have thought more about the serums and then we could have had more options… maybe…"

"T-That doesn't matter, right?" Eren assured her as Historia shrunk again, "what I meant was… I've been having weird feelings… and dreams as well that are no longer forgettable but still foggy."

Eren recalled back to all the times it had happened. An overwhelming feeling that flooded through him.

When she freed him for the chains.

When she called them the 'enemies of humanity'.

When she held out hope to him in her hand.

"… When you held out your hand for me as we left the cave… and as we got onto the cart as well… and while we were traveling…"

The one who spoke next was not Eren but Historia.

"I kept having some strange feeling…" she continued, "… it was like… a flood of power… except…"

"An electric like feeling…" Eren picked up from her, "… just like what we've done for the past several hours… I kept feeling… something…"

"A calming strength… whenever you are near me… just like now…" Historia in sync continued.

"Telling me where to go… and giving me the strength to go there…" he closed.

They turned to each other simultaneously.

"It felt like we were connected…" they both said simultaneously.

Eren and Historia.

They didn't need to nod or gesture in understanding when the other knew through this shared connection.

…

"Yeah… whenever I look into your eyes…"

"… I feel like I understand you completely at that moment…"

…

A supernatural and otherworldly existence.

It felt that something like that connected them together.

It was like –
"It's not necessarily that I know everything that you are thinking of…"

Neither knew which one of them began talking again.

"We can't see each other's entire thoughts just like that…"

Consecutively or completely in sync, it was impossible to tell.

"But it just feels…"

Their thought processes would just align sometimes.

"Like I know **why** what you are feeling… and if you are being real or fake…"

They both couldn't agree more.

Eren had seen through Krista instantly, yet had chosen not to get involved with her.

And then Eren and Historia…

…

They didn't need to say anything about it.

They already knew.

…

"Hah, that reminds me of something…" the brunet decided to bring it up.

"…. Your mother… ?" and the blonde managed to guess easily.

…

Eren turned to her slowly, feeling how Historia had suddenly pulled a chord from him.

"… You… know about…?" his voice wandered. Was it really that easy for her to read him, or was it…

Historia nodded carefully looking sadly at him

"You're mother… used to pull your ear… say that its because your earlobe was red that she knew you had something to hide…” she recited it. A forbidden memory that had been handed over to her, "she would watch your reaction… and she'd just know… that you were lying…"

Historia watched Eren's reaction.

This was different.

Knowing a memory that one hadn't experienced was different from knowing what the other felt and why they did something.

"Yeah… she'd see right through me…” Eren broke into a smile, showing that he didn't feel uncomfortable with it.

"You're pretty good at telling lies and fakes yourself… things that other people don't notice…” she continued.
Thinking back to Krista. And at Historia one more. And also back to… her… still encased in the crystal that had now been moved into the capitol itself.

"I…” Eren stopped and then suddenly examined her and peered over at her. Historia quirked her head as she realised Eren was quite literally checking her out.

Not in the perverted way, but just looking at her face and hair for an odd period of time.

"Your braid… the one you had when we were alone together in the forest house…"

Her hair tied loosely with a single red hairband, in a loose side ponytail.

Just like his mother did.

Except compared to Historia, his mother's hair was longer and a striking dark shade of black.

But otherwise… it was odd when he thought back to Historia's hair back then.

Her hair likewise had been held together by a red tie.

"Thank you Historia…” he spoke after a while.

He had forgotten.

He hadn't even realised it.

But he had been forgetting his mother's face a little after 5 years now.

He hadn't known of his failing memory until he actually tried to picture his mother's face.

"Like I did anything…” she wryly smiled, happy at least that the late little realization seemed to give him some piece of mind. "You know… you look like her a lot as well…”

Eren paused and shrugged slightly. He didn't spend much time ever looking into a mirror, though Hannes had mentioned it to him in the past himself.

Back when… he was alive…

"…What else have you seen? … How much?” Eren decided he should know.

Historia had seen his memories at some point. Was today a partial success in itself somehow?

"I… don't know… I think… when you were a kid… when you didn't have anyone around you and were always fighting with everyone…” she tried to think through the corners of her memories. A part that felt foreign yet belonging with her.

A young boy, who was surely Eren, running out after his childhood enemies.

There was no mistake that it was Eren… all alone as he charged ahead…

"Yeah… that was me…” Eren prodded Historia for more.

"And you spent your days… looking up at the sky…” she replied.

…

"… The sky…”
Eren remembered that memory, still slightly foggy… but he remembered it…

It was like…

Historia puffed out a little, trying to be as quiet as she could, in thought bringing Eren's attention to her.

And then suddenly, he realised it. He remembered it as though its was his own memory, yet it was undeniably Historia's.

A little girl doing work on the farm she was born in, not crossing the gates. She would keep working all day and have the time only to read her few books in secret.

And sometimes…

She would stare up at the sky, firewood in hand ready for the winter.

She would stare up and watch the clouds…

Traveling across the sky, and beyond the fence.

The birds flying across the sky, off and with the breezes, soaring to wherever they wanted to.

"You… as well…" Eren called to her next to him.

"Eh?" she perked up.

"You were just like… me when you were young as well…" Their memories held an odd resemblance.

But one that was absolutely comforting.

"Yeah…" she confirmed the odd image of two people's memories in the same age. Except… the birds they would see dancing across the sky were different…

It was weird to think of someone else knowing one's memories.

It was a very unusual feeling to posses the thoughts of someone else.

But… if it was Historia, then Eren didn't mind at all.

And neither did she if it was him.

Regardless of how long either had known each other in either of her two selves, they felt like they already shared an unbreakable bond.

Something which connected them. It didn't matter even if they felt as if they had known each other for a long time.

One moment.

One moment was all that mattered when it was a moment that meant so much.

They had had that one binding moment on that day in the cave.

And nothing was going to change the unique connection they now had formed together by thrown away chains.
But…

Still…

It felt like… Historia wasn't meant to see such things… like Eren wasn't meant to see such things…

At least as if… not… yet…

It was a weird sense, as if a defiance of fate that they were only partially aware of by the cause of something else.

Eren sat for a while, contemplating on this whole new development. He didn't notice Historia slip up her bed and disappear for a moment, too distracted in their conversation.

Until –

Poof!

"Eh?" Eren stared up in confusion as to what exactly hit him. At first he thought Historia had hit him again for some reason, but it was too light for that.

Historia stood above him, smirk plastered firmly as she held her hand not in a fist but on… a pillow.

"That's punishment for seeing my private memories," she simply stated, eyes showing that she couldn't care less about that.

"But well… yeah…" Eren scratched his head as he leaned back himself, "I mean… they might not necessarily be yours…"

He didn't bring up Frieda's name, but –

Poof!

He was hit slightly less gently on the head again.

"That's for seeing my sister's private memories, creep," Historia said unfazed.

Eren almost pouted at her. He wasn't a creep, and he didn't like being called one. But he got Historia's intent.

Swiftly then, causing Historia's sense to almost leap out, Eren had stretched his arm and body across her bed and up to the top of it, grabbing the soft fabric he hadn't ever felt before.

And just in an instant, the atmosphere was broken, as the two broke into eager smiles at the excuse to get rid of it.

This time Historia felt a light cushion hit against her head gently. She smiled and jumped back onto the bed, where Eren stood unprepared for any sudden counterattack.

Historia suddenly dealt a blow that surpassed Eren's expectations and landed it squarely into his face, knocking him back slightly as she laughed.
"H-Hey! Be gentle!" the Queen ordered, backing back a little on the great bed. There was more than enough space them to jump around for a bit on the soft mattress.

"Sorry, your Majesty," Eren smirked back, "I can't hold back against such a powerful opponent like you."

She really was surprisingly strong. Even if people didn't underestimate her for her short stature… she really was… strong.

It wasn't simply her powerful will that inspired Eren back then, despite it being what he referred to. She really was…

Eren smiled as he grabbed another pillow, and holding one in each hand, as if dual wielding the swords of the ODM gear.

Historia had likewise done the same, having grabbed the pillow and tore it away from Eren.

It reminded them of combat sword practice. Both of them had excelled at it, at least compared to the majority of the other cadets.

Using the pillows, they began an act of improvised swordplay. Eren threw the first hit… only to be kneed in the stomach by Historia after she dodged under him.

"H-Hey, what the hell?!!" Eren coughed, looking at the little demoness.

"Hih, there's no rules on the battlefield right?" she encouraged him.

Eren looked at her accusingly as she smashed white onto his face in a downwards strike.

Eren threw one pillow horizontally, this time hitting her in her stomach and causing her to fall backwards onto the bed after the failed tactical retreat.

"Well… in that case…" Eren called her attention and waited until she got back up.

Before then bringing up his hand to his mouth, as he did whenever he was about to transform.

"Don't. You. Dare." And was promptly stopped by the devil Queen's awakening.

"Y-Yeah, I- I was, only kidding around, Hist- " Eren tried to calm down the openly seething Queen. Before he noticed it all genuinely disappear instantly.

He was blown back a metre or two, almost falling off the edge of the great bed.

"Hihi, you can't underestimate your enemies either," she chastised her soldier's foolishness.

Eren grumbled, before pushing himself into a skid, and trying to trip Historia gently in revenge. The blonde however dodged the slow attack and mid-air, threw a pillow in his face before dropping down onto his stomach.

Eren mumbled as Historia balanced on his stomach. He then rolled, forcing her to jump of and found himself right next to…

"O-Oh, um… y-you should be going easy on your Queen though right," Historia suddenly strutted
as she brought up her remaining pillow before her chest like a shield, "I-I'm an exception right?!"

Eren didn't listen and began grabbing. Historia had only needed a single pillow for sleeping despite literally be provided 20 of them, she had dumped them all in a pile on the other corner of her bed which Eren was now at.

Ammunition loaded, Eren began firing the fluff filled white boulders of death. Historia screamed in response as tried to doge or block the great attack.

Laughing all the while, just as he was.

Eren had already lost himself in his game with Historia.

He could honestly say it.

There were no Titans nor humans to fight here.

There were no enemies.

No need for titles, positions or addresses.

Just them.

There was just him and Historia.

And it was perfect.

He was having more fun than he ever once had in the past.

He could only hope that it would last.

1 Pillow Fight Later…

Both panting, pillows thrown all across the room and the bed covers in an absolute mess. They were too tired to even think about going across the room to collect the remaining pillows by now.

"Hey… how about a… draw…?" Eren panted, finding it hard to balance himself on a bed's surface all of a sudden.

"Y… yeah… it's… a draw…" Historia exhausted herself, agreeing to the equal result.

… A draw in a pillow fight… between Queen and Hope of Humanity…

After a long while, Eren had began realising just how sweaty he was. He could use a shower, but didn't feel it was right to just use Historia's like that at all. A bit of cold water splashed on

"Historia, do you mind if I use your bathroom?" Eren pointed to the door which he presumed was the bathroom at least.

"Um… yeah… I guess…" Historia gestured to him, suddenly thinking about odd things. Oddly lewd things.

Holding hands while only one of the hands was wet. She blushed at the thought of the touching between a wet hand and a dry hand, but refused to let it show to Eren.
Eren had already jumped off her bed and walked over to the door, just as Historia wiped a bit of sweat off herself, though she wasn't as heavily clothed as he was.

"Oh, and don't pull too qui--" Historia then remembered her own habit. Eren had already tried pushing the door himself, before grunting and swinging the door towards him just as Historia tried to warn him.

"AGH!" Eren yelped in pain as the door bashed his nose on the bathroom door. He had opened it much harder than she ever did and the soft crunch in his nose confirmed the damage.

"... Um… yeah… don't do that…" Historia said as Eren gave her the look, clutching his nose as a little bit of steam already began his healing.

He left the door open as he entered the bathroom, Historia taking the time to sort out her thoughts.

Holding hands while one person's are wet. Two pairs of dry hands? No problem, but when one of them was already wet and the other dry…

Eren meanwhile looked open the tap water and collect some cool liquid to wash slash his face a little. He had been stuffed up with his regular clothes followed by his military jacket while riding in a stuffy carriage with Jean for the journey.

He had been continuously trying to wipe away his sweat for a while but it refused to stop. He noticed how he felt oddly hot in general.

As if he was overheating a little? He soaked his head in cold water as he felt it disappear then return a little. A fever? He didn't know as he soaked his hands once more, and grabbing a towel from the side,

Eren then thought of something as he let the water run once more before leaving silently through the door.

The pillow fight re-continued once more. Only after he had splashed down some cold water that he had collected by cupping his fingers right on top of Historia, soaking her hair and the top of her dress a little. Just a little.

The Queen's 'EEK!' scream through the corridors just about summed up her mood at his little antic.

1 Hour Later...

"Hahh… ah…" They both groaned, after they had both collapsed, exhausted on the sheets, they had stared up at the ceiling of Historia's room, both of them unknowingly following the same patterns of paints before losing interest and shuffling into a slightly conifer position.

Historia's hair was sprawled out, and her blonde hair was messed up across the canvas

"Y-Yeah...?" Historia knew Eren wasn't bad but he didn't look approving of whatever she had signed.

She had left her signature on so many things by now, giving approval to each and every one of them. Was Eren concerned at what it was he was reading or disappointed?

She was beginning to grow anxious. If it was something she authorised that -
"Your handwriting really is awful..." Eren then said.

"..." Historia opened her mouth then closed it, then opened again from the different thoughts now swirling through her head. "...Hey! It's not that bad!"

Eren turned and smirked at her as he pointed to it, "You forgot the second 'i' in your name.

"Wh-what?! There's no way that I..." Historia focused on Eren's face as he raised an eyebrow challenging her, "...that... maybe... I... I know how to spell my name, alright?!"

She cried indignantly as Eren put one hand on his waist and turned back to inspect the signature again.

"And you forgot your first 'i' as well," Eren added, "you do know your 'i's and 'e's apart right?"

"Of cOURSE I do," Historia stood up this time, pleading back at him.

"And you missed the 't' in the middle," he pressed on, glancing back at her mid way.

"It..! Okay, they just look weird I know!" She bubbled back. No way was she going to provide Eren with more teasing material by relenting.

"And the 'o' after it." Eren commented once more.

"It's got a littl-" the Queen tried to think of an excuse in the writing style.

"And the 'r' after that," Eren sighed, continuing his interrogation in exposing the true capabilities of the Queen.

"N-No... There's no way... This, this is mutiny!" Historia decides to try doing a running jump at Eren to snatch the paper from him in case he took advantage of their height difference and held it too high.

Eren smirked seeing at beginning the dash. And instead of going high, Eren ducked his arm low and sidestepped just as Historia tried jumping at him only to drop and half hit the desk as she cursed at him.

"Eren, gimme that back!" Wasting no time, she immediately pushed her off the desk and tried grabbing at the parchment but is time Eren held it high, as Historia jumped up in vain at him trying to get the piece from his arms.

"This. Is. TREASON!" She shouts at him between each attempted leap, managing only to scrape against the sides of it as Eren waved it in the air away mockingly.

"Oh and by the way, you also missed the 'a' at the very end," he chuckled at her, not afraid of any threats she might make, as she glared back at him in vain.

"I'll have you beheaded, Eren! Give. It. Back. NOW!" She actually managed to grab it this time, and slip it from Eren's hand as he realised too late.

"Sorry your Majesty," Eren smirked again, "I got a bit too carried away."

"Hmph. Be grateful that I'm such a merciful ruler," she huffed moving back to place the paper back on the desk carefully. She inspected it. Aside from a few bends, there were no particular scotches on it.
Historia realised she needed to be more careful herself next time. If she ended up tearing it even partially, she was certain a certain someone would not be pleased.

"So basically you missed wrote everything right except for the 'istoria' part of your name," Eren surmised, as Historia turned to him in defeat.

'Am I really that bad...?' she internally sobbed. At least she got the first letter right.

"Oh and you forgot the 'H' at the start as well," Eren then finished it all off.

"Um, I, you know... I'm..." she managed, about to explain about her lessons when she suddenly frowned in confusion at what Eren just said.

"Actually it just says 'Queen'," Eren explained. Smirking all the while as Historia came to understand what Eren had been playing at the whole time.

"HUH?! You're the idiot here if you can't read words properly to begin with! Idiot!" Historia glared at him as she stopped over at him, seeing what all of this had been about.

"Hey your Majesty, I never called you one!" He defended himself as he thought of a counterattack, "besides you're the one who put 'Queen' as your first name."

"Huh?! I did not!" Historia glanced at the signature then thrust it in Eren's face, "it says 'Queen Historia' you dumbass!"

"Oh yeah, you're right," Eren scratched his chin with one hand in consideration before pointing at her, "so you've made two errors then!"

"HUH?!" Historia whirlered the paper round to her once again and she looked at it once more. What it fully read in the questionable handwriting was 'Queen Historia I'.

"You wrote your first name as your surname and thought that your first name was 'Queen'," Eren went on as he felt Historia glowering with angry lines that burnt through the paper.

"My name is Queen Historia!" Historia upturned her head and tried burning him with her blue eyes now the strength of icicles and snow blizzards.

"But 'Queen' is just a title. It asks for your name there," he simply did not back down from the challenge.

"MORON!" Historia glared at him, no longer caring about getting the better of him as the teasing had all gone into her head by now. "I'm supposed to sign it like that! I'm supposed to say my title when I sign things under my name!"

"But in that case it should be 'Queen Historia Reiss'. Unless 'I' is your surname now? Actually it looks like you were about to start something like 'I... don't know how to write my name properly'," Eren made his point, never losing his smirk at how one sided this exchange had been.

And Historia finally snapped.

"AARGGGHHHHHHHHHHH!" She screamed, alerting a few guards patrolling the palace who rushed outside, thinking a Titan had suddenly appeared and made the roar with Historia's shout being echoed through the halls, only confusing them further.

Historia breathed heavily as she faced a now finally guilty looking Eren, at the same time, she tore
the important new decree that she had in her hand apart into two pieces.

"S-S-Sorry, um... Historia...? W-Was that important?" Eren pointed to the torn piece of paperwork.

Historia breathed heavily as she realised what she had just done. She then stepped forward into Eren's guard, who this time, awaited punishment willingly and gulped his breath down in preparation.

He saw from earlier how Historia truly did pack a punch, and awaited it knowingly. The room had gone silent and only disturbed by Historia's steady breathing in his chest and the shouts of a few guards running outside on what he hoped was the courtyard and not just outside the hall.

And then it came. Right into the stomach with all Historia's strength.

The lightest punch that he had ever felt. Before he felt another hit, this time right below his rib cage, at the spot where his heart was.

Historia's head had weakly slunk end down into his torso, with the remainder of her strength, she balanced at an angle on him as her arms hang limply.

She was far too exhausted from the pillow fight and the jumping around just earlier for anything else and had practically expended the last of her strength.

"Sorry Historia," Eren placed his right hand on her left shoulder as he brought her head steadily up, jumping a little at the frozen expression of an unimpressed glare promising revenge at some point in the future. "I went a bit too far."

"..." she mulled over her responses. "... You'll pay for this..."

"Yeah... I'll make it up to my Queen," he said as she stood back up on her own wobbly and they both simultaneously looked at the time. "We've been here for a while now... I should probably go find Jean now."

"Running away from your punishment?" She queried him. She sat down on the bed again, intending to continue the experiments but they probably had less than half an hour before Historia would gave to attend the meetings once more.

"Apologies your Majesty, I will be sure to turn myself in at a later date" Eren assured her one way or another.

"..." Historia took that as the sign for his parting. "Okay..."

She watched him.

Back turned already.

"See you later... Eren..."

Historia had called after him.

He stopped and looked at her once more, raising a hand in a gentle wave.

"See ya Historia," Eren said his goodbye and turned away, heading towards the door.

Until small arms wrapped themselves around his waist from behind, firmly rooting him to the spot.
"His... toria...?" Eren muttered, the strong, small arms refusing to budge. He leaned backwards lifting his arm as he felt the girl's head deeply pressed into his back.

"Eren... just for a while..." her voice was a quivering whisper that held confidence only from unspoken trust, "... stay like this... for a while..."

He couldn't make out his face from the angle, only her golden locks that poorly concealed the emotions within the girl. Rather, it seemed to only reflect the fear the girl had.

"... It's alright..." Eren gently reassured, dropping his arms once more ans to the girl's left arm which was gripping the front of his chest like nails.

He softly brushed her arm, grasping it firmly as he pulled her around, never letting go. He could feel the wetness in his back now, not overflowing but still a light clot of dampness.

"...Don't..." Historia finally managed, the signs of holding an almost shattered voice with pure will, "... Don't..."

She wasn't fragile. But she had one fragile point that was already half broken and only mended over,

"... Don't..." A crack in her voice appeared this time, impossible to hold back as Eren's own hands began to rub against her arm caringly, forcing her to drop her hold as he turned to face her. "... Don't... Don't leave... Don't just... leave one day... like... she did..."

The feeling when Ymir left her, reduced her to absolute zero. She had lived a fake life since then, but had now found something.

She had a genuine dream she felt for now... no matter how contradictory it may be to the laws of the human world... she knew what she wanted to do...

And he was the reason she found it...

The foundation of it all, the beginning point.

If the foundations disappeared someday, then...

"Yeah... I promise." Eren placed his hands on her shoulders, making her look up at him again. A bead of water was present from one of her eyes, caught on her eyelash.

Eren wanted to wipe it away. But felt that he didn't quite have the heart to do it just yet. He didn't know what Historia would think at such a thing. Wasn't it just a bit too far for him to cross just yet?

"I promise I won't ever leave you."

Eren repeated, swearing the unbreakable vow.

"... You're always running ahead..." Historia said after a while, "... you were always running forward... chasing after your enemies... and you were always leaving Mikasa and Armin behind..."

"Eh...? How do you... Oh..." Eren looked surprised. Perhaps he had never paid attention to her back then, but he realised that the opposite was the case for Krista.

Or maybe Historia just knew that he wasn't being entirely truthful. He decided that it was probably both.
"After you got taken by Reiner and Bertholdt that day…” Historia explained, "… all I could do was wait, feeling their frustration and not being able to go rescue Ymir… I listened in on what they said… they talked with Mr Hannes as well… about how… you always were like that…”

"… Oh…” Eren fit the memory into his head, the first time that he had heard about this. "I know that… now where we are…. It makes it even more difficult… but you're right… I'll always be going ahead of you to the battle…"

Eren thought back. He realised it.

He was always waiting for everyone to catch up to him.

Advancing after to fight his enemies…

He had always thought it was natural for anyone to do that.

But over time, he realised it…

He was… the only one who was continuing to fight alone in the battle…

There had been nobody who had followed after him…

There had been nobody who had run alongside him as they raced towards the next fight…

There had been nobody who had led him onward and shown him the way to the next enemy…

Nobody.

There was nobody else there when he finally stopped to look around.

…

"… It's different now…” Eren said.

Who was he trying to assure? Historia or himself?

"No… you are still… going ahead… and… you may one day go somewhere far away… somewhere that I can't follow you…”

Her voice tore into his own body. An attack greater than any wound he had received.

But –

"… You're wrong…” Eren stated, causing her to look up into him as their eyes drew into one. "You're strong Historia… there is no way that you could never close the distance between us… you're the one…”

He paused and breathed out after shutting his eyes away from Historia seeing everything exposed to her.

"You're the one… whose running so far ahead… you're the one who I'm trying to reach…”

Eren could see it as he said it. The one who was running so far away from him.

He wanted to follow her.

But their paths reached a crossroad and they split.
But she was far further along hers than he was.

"Wh… open… your eyes…" Historia told him.

And he did.

The moment was set once more and Historia's eyes launched a counter statement which Eren's emeralds reflected back.

He tried again to point out a problem, only to find the answer ready for her.

"I know… what's it like… when it looks like when there's nobody around…"

Eren began to assure her.

Assure her of his promise and nature.

"You can't see anyone in the distance… and you can't hear anyone's footsteps…"

But –

"You felt it right?"

A connection that showed properly only when their eyes exchanged.

Though it went invisible, it was always there, unbroken and unharmed.

Historia's eyes shown in affirmation but remained naked and silent.

"I promise that I'll always return, no matter how far I have to chase after the enemy…"

Even after the sun had set and his enemies left him for their home.

He did the same.

Eren always returned home again…

Every time.

"We will meet at the crossroads later down once more… at the next forked road… at the next point that our paths meet…"

…

"Yeah… we will…" Historia spoke at last.

There was no further doubt in her.

They would meet again.

"Thank…" they both said completely in sync again, "…you…"

"…Historia…"

"…Eren…"

Maybe tomorrow.
The day after.
Next week.
In a month.
After a year.
After 10 years.
After 50 years.
They would see each other again… surely…
"… We'll see each other again… because we'll both be going after our own enemies ahead…"
They both said it once more.
Her enemies were different and they were the same as his.
The world on the interior, and the world on the outside.
They covered for each other, and their existence protected them both from either of the two threats.
Advancing ahead towards changing the world.
Trying to reach… the land they see beyond the revolution…
…
They knew it.
They would see each other again. Again and once more.
And that meant everything to them for now.
The promised reunion of the two friends connected to each other.
The clock ticked and a distant city bell rang.
And then Eren was gone.
Eren had disappeared, leaving Historia in the room once more.
The day went by, and Historia didn't pay attention elsewhere.
There was only one thing passing through her head again ad again.
All day, until the sun set.
She fell asleep and absorbed it all.
She felt it.
In the pitch black room.
She was sure of it.
That her friend was likewise in the darkness, waiting for sleep to take him.

Thinking only of how they still felt it.

Something that connected them.

They both knew it was real.

...

Then on the seventh day, Historia rested happily, at last.

Why was it that the next week and the week after she wasn't ever as tired as before? No matter, how disgusted she might get in the stomach in the various meetings or how irritated she would always be in her lessons.

She kept feeling… more alive than ever before.

Because their parting was only temporary…

Until the next crossroad…

PART II

(A/N: … LOL what the hell am I even doing with the structure of this chapter at this point?!)

...

So…

… Enjoy…?

- or just give up/take a break!

Blue flowers decorating the green fields. The sun rays, were the clouds permitted entry, sprinkled the blue flowers standing out in the green fields, almost exclusively.

And then blood wallowing them whole.

Screams and devouring of people.

Seized corpses and ravaged lands.

The farmlands, the mills and the granaries.

All of it consumed in a sea of blood.

A calm hearth and a child's room with... a bird cage in the corner.

The military coat of old times laid on the table.
The child's toys on the empty bed.

The pipe blower, signaling the horn of the end times. A nobleman. A cook. A country girl. A teddy bear. And a rabbit.

And the symbols from a land beyond the walls stitched into the curtains.

A deep forest and life.

Calling winds and deceptive rain.

A massive skinless face which lifts its head above a great wall perhaps?

And then the birds fled…

Perhaps no different from the cattle on the surface…?

---

**Mid Fall of the Year 850 – 1 Month After Historia's Ascension to the Thrown**

Historia decided what the most embarrassingly types of lessons were at last.

And it wasn't handwriting practice, no matter how much she dreaded people hearing that the Queen was practicing her 'A's – at least she'd mastered her curly 'C's and kicking 'K's now!

"So, um… nice weather we're having…" the brunet said while looking out of the window to the dark clouds of the morning, the sun not having been seen all day.

Historia quirked her eyebrows up at him, lightly glaring in annoyance, not that she really meant it… much.

These 'lessons' were embarrassing… and yet… the embarrassment felt comforting to her when combined with the presence of Eren.

As they had gotten into a habit of starting with, after an obligatory pillowy greeting, Eren and Historia then moved onto holding hands.

In the Queen's bedchamber no less, its the sort of thing that had a high risk of raising suspicion should word get out.

Eren had suggested that they go for a walk a few times, and so they had gone around the courtyard where there would be nobody to see them as they walked hands held everywhere.

Except for the palace guards. Who just kept staring, and staring and staring…

They both decided to just stick in the room in the end. The air was growing cold as well, signaling the now not far off winter.

Eren always simply wore his brand new military jacket while Historia simply worse light dresses, trying to get a new one each time to have on for his arrival.

Which Eren never seemed to notice the difference of.

So what? That didn't bother Historia. Not one bit. She didn't need a straight up opinion that wouldn't be sugarcoated for the Queen.
She didn't need a friend's opinion of what she should wear and what Er— people would like to see her in.

If she had to be honest though, she now did have a bit bigger interest in fashion all of a sudden. But that was just because she had the element of choice now. There was no other reason why.

Not that she had a little crus— friend that took notice of it anyway.

She turned back into the present reality, her eyes had just been lost in the emerald orbs of a world made up of only great woods.

Pressing right against her just below, she could feel an aching desire to never part with the current contact they were having.

It was so hot… And so big… and it was difficult for Historia to fit in her own. She squeezed as shivers of exciting heat fuzzled through her entire body.

And it wasn't just one that Eren had, there were a pair of four. Luckily at least, Historia had 4 gaps that could be filled. And vice versa for them both.

Eren kneaded his fingers into Historia's gaps as she did the same into his.

"Do you still have a fever?" she decided to bring up, partly out of mannerism, since she knew that Eren clearly did, and partly to try and divert away from the focus event.

Staring at each other while blushing the whole way.

They didn't necessarily have anything else to stare at.

"Y… eah…” Eren replied and went back to staring at her. They were seated opposite each other and holding hands across the table.

They went back to staring into each other, looking through each other's eyes and seeing the thoughts process of each other.

"So, um… nice weather we're having…” Eren said.

…

Then his eyes shot in memory. 'Oh… yeah… I already said tha—' Eren thought, looking away awkwardly as he stared out the window again.

"Three times already," Historia added helpfully.

'Yeah… that's the fourth time now…” Eren musing his lack of sense, kept staring out of the window.

They had talked almost constantly for their whole time together in the previous 'memory experiments' however now things had become more pressured.

Eren was now needed to practice hardening non-stop as Hanji had now completed the designs of a device he would have to build.

They had been meeting thrice or four times a week for the past 3 weeks, however now it had been bottled down to one, primarily from Eren's schedule.
Historia's lessons had been faring far better than ever before after Eren's first visit and she always awaited to see Eren, often on alternating days.

Time away from everything, it was a moment which they could both relax together. She could now sit quietly and deflect the stupidity and roundabout 'discussion' she would hear around the council meetings which were becoming more focused and a bit less frequent as the situation stabilized.

But now on Eren's side, results were becoming more needed. Traveling to the capitol and back took the whole day for him and he would always pleasantly drift off to sleep whenever he returned to the headquarters down south in Trost district.

Using a day without results was becoming a bigger issue and they needed to reveal better results from their personal experiments.

And so, the mood between them had become a little serious and a little awkward as both tried hard to search.

Search into the other.

And then into themselves.

Searching for something.

Historia followed Eren's direction to the same window that he was staring at. It was still cloudy outside, and it could pass off for late evening despite it approaching noon soon.

No source of light in sight for a while now.

Just like their experiments. No shine of any lightning spark that equaled what they received the first two times which they touched.

The first time…

Was after they both left to head to the next rendezvous after spending that day in the house near the woods.

It seemed like a memory from years ago, thought it was a little more than a month and bits of a week away.

Back when Historia was so different.

Emptily, she had followed after Eren outside after feeling the urge to do so.

They had simply sat around, much like they were now, in an odd comfort and watched.

They watched it all around them.

The autumn leaves falling from some early trees with dying bright dyes of amber.

The great clouds flying across their sky, just as always since their childhoods.

The setting sun, disappearing over the horizon as the twinkling white light appeared.

Golden and filled with bright hope.

Two days after that, they had left and run into the MPs along the way. Eren had been short straight
through the heart and reaching out to him, Historia had touched his skin.

She had seen an odd image that she was struggling to recall. As if the lid had been shut after a glimpse of the treasure inside the chest and a lock swiftly put on it, with the key taken elsewhere…

What had opened that memory in the first place. She had seen the resemblance of lightning simply by touching Eren.

Had she done something else in the moment? It was no different when they did in the cave, only far stronger when she touched his spine in that place, and the memories of Frieda had not disappeared.

A key… what was the key to opening the hidden treasure of knowledge inside?

A key…

…

Where had she seen an oddly familiar thing before?

...

"I wish…" Historia began, both of them still fixated on the cloud filled sky with neither the blue sky nor the sun visible. "That we could know where the sun is on cloudy days…"

"… Yeah… I know…" Eren nodded understandingly, staring at the dark coverage. "… A way to find the sun… whenever you are lost in the clouds…"

They both shuddered all of a sudden. A light tremor that seemed to recoil through them. Both jumped and turned to face one another, hands still connected.

"Eh..? Just now…" they both said simultaneously before stopping and nodding to each other.

"Just… that sounded familiar from somewhere…" Historia began trying to seek through her own memory as Eren did the same.

They both made eye contact and sought into each other as well as themselves.

The whole experience was very awkward for both of them. If they had been just 'comrades', then it would have probably been difficult to even speak with each other.

So far, they had both only somehow found limited bits of the other's memories in each other. Memories of their childhood.

They both seemed to have approximately the same amount of vague and jumbled foreign thoughts. All of them stopping at the deaths of the other's mother.

They had both seen it happen. Each other's history from birth to that day. And then after, no more recent memories had so far shown themselves.

They had spent a lot of time simply talking and reconciling with each other on every bit of their early memories for the past weeks that they managed to visit.

"…" Neither said anything, now eyes focused on one other once more, they both found nothing in their notice.
It was a difficult feeling to place. Sometimes it was only in their sleep that they noticed, as if the memories from the other just happened to be there all along.

They sighed both in uncertainty, chins falling to the table desk as they continued to stare at each other uncertainly.

Eren was the first to eventually break away from his friend and let go of her hands. He rose from his feet, stretched and began pacing the room in thought.

"Don't lie this time…" Historia suddenly startled him. He turned to her innocently, "… it's not like we'll never see each other… just… if Hanji says so then it must be important, right?"

He turned away from her and began walking across her room again. She had said what she had to. The retaking of Wall Maria was approaching and Historia didn't want to be dragging Eren up here when it conflicted with that.

She hid her sigh from him as she decided to try and hide her disappointment that Eren wasn't allowed to visit her more than once a week now.

Unless Eren told a lie again, and made up some useless information that didn't help. The memories of the others childhoods. And of Frieda.

They both had shared in her memories now, yet only the ones were Frieda was present with the young Historia, and nothing of value with information about the Titans.

Eren had lied last week and Hanji figured out that he was fabricating certain details to try and seem like their memory experiments were getting somewhere.

The section commander had not been pleased when she noticed a contradiction in what Eren said and figured that out.

Eren had been strolling around the room for a while now, inspecting every speck of it. He had been brushing his hand along the wall, feeling its texture, when he had come to one of the wall lamps.

"…Oh…" Eren turned round as he thought of an apology to mutter, "… something broke it… I'm sure it was already loose…"

Historia turned round and found Eren holding a wall lamp… attacked to a piece of the wall, bits of ancient concrete falling to the floor while Eren rubbed the back of his head awkwardly.

"Pfft," Historia snorted, exactly in the way that she had been told to never do. She clamped her mouth shut as she giggled at the sight of Eren looking awkward and not knowing what to do, like a cute litt–

"You know that I don't care abut that," she coughed and said between little coughs of amusement. Historia continued smiling at how goofy he looked while holding the piece of broken furniture and wall that she had another 11 sets of throughout the room.

Eren placed it at the nearest desk to him before walking back to Historia and taking his seat again. He stared at her blankly and his eyes said 'I no do breaking thing!'

"Krmph, HAHAAAA!" Historia burst out laughing at him again and began banging her hands on the table as Eren tried to play dumb a her.
She continued laughing for a few more minutes until she peeked her head up at him from her arched back hands. He was hiding his face in embarrassment and slightly pouting guiltily.

"… That wall was old…” Eren explained and pinned the blame on time. Historia snorted again and giggled a little more.

"Eren… I told you… I don't care…” Historia smiled at him as he finally turned, no less embarrassed. Wasn't he supposed to be protecting the Queen as a soldier, not breaking her room? She smirked at the thought but decided to keep quiet.

But her thought was noticed by Eren who glared at her lightly before turning away from her again. She smirked at him for a little more until he spoke again, this time actually seriously.

"This palace…” Eren turned back to look at the partially broken wall that he had removed, "… is older than a century…”

"H-Oh… yeah… I guess you're right," she agreed, looking around again, "… probably before… the Titans came and the King altered our ancestor's memories… maybe…”

The palace would no doubt have been built on and rebuilt as new rooms were added. But the palace would have began somewhere.

Three walls. Made of Titans. All centered around… a mid coordinate… and that was this palace.

Mithras was the capitol and at the centre of it all, and the palace was at the centre of Mithras.

Like a centre point on a map…

"I'll look into that," Historia said, "… though it'll probably be a while before I can tell you any results…”

The didn't have much to go on. But a search like that at least didn't have absolutely no basis.

"By the way…” Eren decided he ought to bring up now, "section commander Hanji said that maybe we should visit the caverns again and try the experiment there at some point… not that its a cavern anymore."

She nodded, understanding the thinking behind it. The place where her sister had been killed. She didn't particularly harbour any resentment for Eren's father, but she still remembered the painful feelings that they both had in that place.

"That can be arranged, but just so you know, I'll be particularly busy over the next week or two," Historia mentioned.

That was a half lie. She would be busy but she really wanted Eren to not have to expend his strength traveling to and from the capitol and using up the whole day,

"Oh, that's fine, she meant around a month from now," Eren hesitated for a little while, before continuing, "and… sorry… I didn't tell you earlier…”

"Eh?” Historia looked up, trying to see his eyes which Eren was annoyingly averting. She realised it wasn't on purpose however as he seemed to look out into the gray skies.

"Tomorrow… we will be testing my powers in Trost District, and it's going to take the whole week at least," Eren turned to her, knowing that he won't be able to visit her anytime for a while. "I,
"Mhm, I got it, thanks... as always Eren..." Historia nodded back understandingly, "but you should focus on the expedition for now. I guess it may be a while until we see each other again no matter what we do... but that can't be helped, right?"

"Yeah," Eren instantly replied, "sorry if you get lonely again..."

Historia laughed gently, "you don't gave to worry. I'm... not alone without you..."

"Um, well... no, but I mean..." Eren struggled to come up with what to say to that, until he realised what she meant.

"... I have your promise... so there's no way that I can be lonely when I have that and some of your memories to keep me company..." Historia smiled at her friend.

This was he part when the sun is meant to come out suddenly from, the skies and travel through the window to light up Historia and make her look like an angel.

But no light came. Because it didn't need to. Because Historia wasn't an angel. Because Historia, a friend to the boy in front of her.

And that's all that Eren needed to smile at her truthfully.

A knock at the door was suddenly hard, disturbing the two. They jumped but quickly got about looking proper.

"Please come in," Historia said clearly, quickly setting herself up in a regal position and smoothing out her attire just as Eren did the same.

The door opened as Historia's supervisor and teacher, Adrianna walked in properly.

"Excuse me, your Majesty," her assistant said, gesturing to her friend, "but I'm afraid you will have to cut this short. It will start soon."

"Thank you. I understand," Historia nodded before getting up slowly just as Eren... hopped round and pulled the chair away from her.

She almost stared at him in bewilderment but had to hide it with a soft smile of gratitude in the elder woman's presence. Historia settled on cursing Eren in her head as he shot her a mocking grin that she wanted to hit so badly.

"Thank you Mr Jaeger, I trust that you won't find it improper for me to leave you to exit the palace," Historia said accordingly as her aide already turned away, signaling for the young Queen to follow her, though not walking out of earshot. "Shall I provide a guard as an escort for you?"

She gestured to the two who were now outside her door, both lined up after returning with the aide through the hallway moments prior. Eren rolled his eyes and quickly closed in next to Historia's ear.

"What's 'it'?

"Well... I'll show you once it gets done," Historia said quietly back to him, "... its what started with you after all..."

"... Eh?" Eren offered in return, only to have the Queen swiftly follow after her elder and leave him
behind. The guards then bowed sloppily and closed the door between them.

He was left alone in the Queen's bedchamber. Eren sighed at the prospect. Shouldn't he have been told to leave?

He looked around the room and pulled Historia's chair back in for her as he did the same with his. He looked but of the window, where the clouds were still dark and everywhere, now all the blue in the room had disappeared away from behind the door.

There was no blue like it anyway. It was a mixture of the sky and the ocean that made up her vibrant orbs of life.

The blue… disappearing… hidden by the clouds…

Then he seemed to remember it. The memory that seemed to sneak its way into a mind for him to scavenge through until Eren at last found it, already in lace at a time he knew not where.

\[\text{aly a o t e e r?}\]

"You…"

\[\text{It was that place again.}\]

\[\text{One of total darkness, an inability to move, connected only by a great spine that overextending from the human body.}\]

"… will be the Last Subject here…"

\[\text{It was a women's voice.}\]

\[\text{A familiar voice, that he felt he knew for hundreds of years.}\]

---

**Late Fall of the Year 850 – The Orphanage**

"HEEEY!" Historia shouted, chasing the two kids which run away from her after they suddenly dared to disobey the rules of the game.

Her country dress and shoulder scarf, several sizes to big for her, was far more comfortable than the military suits and formal dresses that she had been wearing over the past 2 months.

She chased after them across the fields and through the heather.

This was it.

This was what Historia wanted.

"I don't know..." Jean began, as he leaned back against the fence, arms crossed. He along with Eren and Armin had taken a moment to rest as they watched the progress of the orphanage and Historia now running around.

"Yeah…" Armin passively said from next to Jean's right, likewise leaning back and causing the fence to get leaned back as well. He and Jean where wearing much more comfortable yet still smart clothes and jackets, their old worn down shirts and trouser that they had worn since they were children put aside.
"She's not the queen I expected her to be," Jean stated, referring to the whole orphanage idea especially that they were helping with thanks to Eren so nicely volunteering the squad to do the work,

'Of course she's not… what were you expecting… Historia… is…' Eren thought, watching how Historia caught the two kids by the back of their shirts at last and began scolding them.

His dark brown longcoat, formerly a black colour that had been showered by time, blowing gently through the short gust of wind.

The warmth of it, not fitting to any memory he could find at all.

"She's been wearing the crown for two months now…" the tallest of the three boys continued, "… but she seems more at home running an orphanage than ruling."

'… You think she wouldn't?' Eren mentally ridiculed Jean's observation, which Eren just absolutely needed to disturb the moment he was having as he watched Historia.

The world had changed around them since the day in the underground chapel and Historia had changed along with it.

"It's the military that's really ruling the walls… so there's no way of hiding the fact that the monarchy is just for show," Armin summarised, "but do you know what they call Historia on the street?"

'Hm?' Eren's attention was caught though he continued watching Historia get through to the two kids who only giggled to whatever she tried.

"The 'cattle-farming goddess'. They mean it lovingly, of course," the blond said,

'… They better…' Eren thought, not completely registering what he was actually thinking and the way he was saying it in. It was a soldier's duty to be concerned for the matters of his Queen, right?

"Naturally. The hero who vanquished an attacking Titan turns out to be this modest and admirable?" pondered Jean, thinking back to how quickly Historia seemed to change. Frankly he didn't understand how it happened. "I guess she really is a goddess now…"

'No… Jean… maybe… Shut up and let me enjoy… this… in peace…?' Eren bit back a scowl as he focused back on the sight of Historia pushing the two orphans towards the building. The undisturbed sight of Historia reminded him of –

"At this rate, no one's even going to remember who plugged the hole in Trost District," Jean interrupted Eren's internal monologue once more, throwing a provocative grin to get Eren's attention "Eh?"

"One of the reasons Historia made the decision to become Queen…" Eren decided to explain, "… was to do this."

"…" Jean closed his mouth as Eren ignored him. Eren had recently been abnormally mellow to any challenge Jean threw his way, no matter how much Jean had tried to get his attention of the past couple months, their rivalry seemed disconnected.

"This?" Armin questioned instead, prodding Eren to explain.

The brunet nodded as he gestured to all the kids, one of which was pulling Sasha's hair to no notice
of the huntress's agony while another pulled Connie's cheek as they tried to hang off him. A group of mischiefs crowding together, the only one who they weren't bothering was of course Mikasa.

"She looked everywhere, from the underground to every corner of the Walls… she gathered the orphans and the people in need she found there, brought them to this farm and started to take care of them."

Eren hadn't been with her for every time but he's visited at least a dozen times to find the Queen instead setting things about as per the plan.

"Even the Captain's backing her up," Armin noted the stark contrast to the odd ends that had been at one point in the past.

"Well… Captain Levi was from the underground, after all, they were concerned about a backlash from the aristocracy at first, but all their resistance did was further strengthen her support amongst the people." Eren remembered how Historia mentioned that some of the nobles had voiced their disapproval in public, only for it to reach the ears of the newspaper companies and earn her favour.

Eren looked back through all the times he had gone to visit Historia recently. The first week seemed to have taken a great toll on her, however ever since then, it seemed like Historia's devotion had ascended limitlessly.

A dream found in the moment of when she apparently saw him in the cave.

"But… when I see someone crying, saying… no one needs them… I want to tell them… it's not true..."'

A wish that was the first spark of a beautiful flame.

"No matter who! No matter where! I'll come to the rescue!"

A general and undefined dream that seemed to sprout, unrealistic and more of an ideal from the sounds of it.

"I don't think she'd thought it out quite this far…” Eren stated.

But Historia did it.

She accomplished such a thing based of a simple honest desire.

"… But she said she was going to find people in trouble, no matter where they were, and go save them. This is what Historia wanted to do…” he finished, simply and truly happy himself how the girl had managed.

She looked so fragile, lost and empty about 2 and a half months ago.

Eren had suggested her to simply walk down her own path that time.

She had broken into a run and then a great sprint, shooting past Eren as she left him behind.

But only then, just as he stumbled and lost any reason to continue walking down his own path, Historia had appeared right next to him.

She picked him up, hand in hand and pulled him forward, along with her.

Whenever she let go, Eren seemed to fall into a short step by step movement.
When they held hands once more, he could run half way across the world.

But then their paths would break.

Only for a moment, but he would have to manage on his own, unable to see her at the centre of the world.

But then their paths would intersect once again, and she would be there at his side again.

It was strange that even though Historia seemed to run leagues faster than him, he never once lost sight of her.

Almost as if –

"Hey, you're slacking again!" Historia came running towards the three soldiers, snapping Eren out of his daydream.

"Ack," Armin winced, stretching himself off the fence and moving back to the several crates and sacks of goods that still needed to be carried from where the wagon dropped them off at their feet.

"She found us," Jean rubbed the back of his neck as he tried to raise a complaint, "can't we take a break…?"

"After we carry all of this," Historia replied, lifting a crate off the ground on her own, "the sun's about to set!"

It was a unique tender yellow glow this time, gently warming the ground from the cold wind which kept flowing back and forth down the countryside.

A gentle and pure warmth.

"She's starting to remind me of my mom…" Jean said to Armin as the two carried both of their share first, leaving for Historia to drop down behind Eren as she clearly intended to.

"A goddess, huh?" Armin questioned, remembering back to how they all knew he old 'Krista'. Or at least, they thought they knew.

Historia watched the backs of Jean and Armin gain some distance away from them before she spoke. She didn't know why she waited since there wouldn't be any problem for Jean and Armin to overhear, yet for some reason…

She just felt right to walk beside Eren, just the two of them for the moment.

"So I hear the hardening experiments are going well?" Historia began the conversation, knowing that Eren was no doubt exhausted at this very moment.

Her face then suddenly became flushed for the moment of silence, not intending the potential other meaning by this. She prayed that Eren would not pick up on it.

He turned to her and smirked. Historia embarrassingly turned away immediately, cursing at herself.

Since when did Eren pick up on these things?

"Yeah," Eren coughed before saving her any teasing this time round, and answered the question itself, "I'm able to block a cave now… but we're not ready for the mission yet."

Eren's eyes changed instantly, lacking a single trace of humour.
"If we don't hurry..." Eren continued, changing the atmosphere entirely, "... they'll come again."

"I am Free..."
"I am not Free..."
"I am not a Slave..."
"I am a Slave..."
"I... am a Slave... to... –"

She pushed the brief flash away as they continued walking towards the newly established orphanage.

Historia watched his face contort from dispassion into a worn out and depressed expression that she had began becoming used to.

It hurt.

For some reason, that expression hurt her, making her feel concerned for his well-being while knowing she couldn't do anything to stop his thoughts turning to this.

...

"What do you want to do?" she asked him, staring down at the ground just like Eren himself was as she continued trotting beside him.

She saw it. The clear tiny and hidden movements in his feet.

His feet were trembling ever so slightly, causing him to sway side to side as he listened and thought to himself.

"What's going to happen if you ever meet Reiner and Bertholdt again... ?" Historia continued

"..." Eren was silent as he soaked in his thoughts. The world around him. And the memories it held.

Was there really a choice?

...

...

... Was there a choice which wasn't an act of pure betrayal?

...

It was too late now.

Even if it wasn't, what was he to do?

Run away and follow the other side to the answers?

...
Perhaps…

Perhaps… if when the truth about his existence. About the Founding Titan. About his father's sin.

If when that truth had come to light from their mouths, what would have happened?

Would he have believed them and forfeited his life?

There was no way he would ever believe anything that came out of their mouths ever again. That was what Eren thought for sure back then.

Yet he had believed Rod Reiss after he saw the memories of his father.

If it had been them who had shown him the truth…

If he had seen the memories of the past and about the First King and been taken by his former friends.

… What would he have done?

What would he have done if it wasn't Historia that was there, and them instead?

If he had learnt the truth through them, and so lost in his own existence, would he have begged them to kill him instead?

Given up on his whole will, buckled under the weight of the sacrifices and offered up his power to them.

He had done so to Historia under the guise that it would save humanity in his hands.

But that was a lie.

He knew it. She knew it.

It was a complete lack of feeling.

That was the only thing they felt.

The lack of any other feelings was the sole pain that made him want to disappear.

It hurt. So much.

He never needed to happen.

It would be better for everyone if he had never been born.

He wanted to be free of it.

That was all.

He would have passed the judgement to anyone before him, no matter who, so he could finally…

…

No.
'Stop... I need to...' Eren commanded himself internally.

How many times did he have to tell himself to not think like that anymore.

How many times did Historia think back to it?

...

It was because Historia had been there that he was here now.

What would they have done?

What would Reiner, Bertholdt and Annie have done if they found him like that?

...

There was no way to ever find out.

That time had long since past and he was only here now.

He wasn't that person anymore.

He had a different flame in his body now.

...

"I... have to kill them..."

His voice was already threatening to falter as he did his best to hide it.

It was cracking much too obviously as he bit down his upper lip and swallowed his doubts as best as he could again.

...

"... Do you want to kill them?" Historia clarified, asking Eren's true feelings once again.

She had waited for a while... waited to ask him again a question that she knew the answer to but wanted both of them to hear it.

What he really wanted. What he really felt was the right thing.

...

Eren trailed on, crushing down on the slow growing grass of the now suddenly steep hill.

...

"I..."

The earth beneath him suddenly existed, just like always.

"... have to..."

...

He failed. Unable or unwilling to say it, Eren only repeated what he said. His true feelings were
They walked on in a knowing silence.

The cattle were grazing upon the grass a short way ahead, feeding on the last fresh nutrients before the winter would come and freeze the ground.

The topic had taken a serious turn yet the silence between them easily comforted both of them.

Their footsteps, almost in sync despite their height gap, sounded the first stage as the ground likewise hardened and ceased being muddy from the few rainy weeks.

They followed the backs of Jean and Armin a little ahead of them as they approached the storage house of the orphanage.

It was really two orphanage houses, one of the girls and the boys, then another for the stores, and another for the livestock.

The quiet pasture hills filled with a few late blooming flowers gave free reign to the soft wind which whistled up and over them.

People filled in through the storage house one after the other, bringing the imported goods purchased through the royal budget. In this part at least, it would not snow for at least another month of two however the air was already turning just a little colder after every step they took.

To Eren and Historia at least, it brought no discomfort as they both subconsciously focused on listening to the accompanying footsteps of the other, their presences moulding into one for the moment.

"I hope we figure out soon…" Historia broke the silence, "… why this world turned out liked this…"

Knowledge which she cast aside in exchange for the continuous existence of the presence next to her.

"I can't regret…" she reaffirms, playing back their conversation around 2 months ago again in her head, "… turning down the First King's power…"

"And… there's no way I can regret after seeing you that day…" the blonde continued, referring back to that moment.

Eren shuffled a look to her, letting his mouth fall open slightly, just as the girl turned around to look at the two outlines travelling through the fields.

"The children from the underground have started to smile recently," Historia changed the topic just as both of their eyes landed on a pair of kids running alongside in the fields. Just as Historia had said, the kids were smiling happily for the first time, being able to roam on the surface.

"What we're doing here can't be wrong," she stated firmly.

Eren and Historia watched for two for a while longer, tumbling and treading through the fresh heather beneath their feet.

As if they were like two parents watching their own children in their youth.
Or so that was the thought which threatened to bring back the shade on Historia's cheeks again.

"...Yeah," Eren mustered. Looking back, he could hardly remember such days anymore. Frankly, he didn't think he would see such a sight ever again in any generation so long as Wall Maria had not been retaken.

Perhaps others would state this is no big deal. The people were still suffering from widespread famine within Wall Rose. A few children being happy around the place surely wouldn't amount to much for them.

And yet... Historia had been able to do something like this in a period of 2 months... Children who would have had nothing, continued living on in the dirt until they died, empty within.

Eren smiled at her as he looked her way. If she could change the lives of a few dozen in a single stroke, then another 100 with a few. Then a 1000 over a few more months. And then 10s of 1000s in a few years...

"You're amazing," Eren said sincerely. It hadn't technically even been two months, barely one, since she managed to get the proposal through.

A single orphanage seemed to accomplish more than several battles.

"N-Not at all..." Historia replied, cursing herself internally as she failed and revealed the glowing warm red on her face from the compliment.

A blush that did not go unnoticed as the scarf-wearing girl marched in swiftly ahead.

'W-why are y-you smiling at me like that?' Historia frantic thoughts caused her face to feel funny. With good reason, for Eren's smile was one she had not seen for the 3 years she had known him.

She had had Eren's smiling at her many times during their meetings in the palace but this one... … Seemed different.

She had never seen him smile like this.

It wasn't an 'it's nice to be around you' smile this time, which he had given her many times purely out of comfort and enjoying her company.

This sort of smile...

... Was more like a...

"Even though you were saying that humanity should just go to hell that day in the cave," Eren reminded her.

Her thoughts forgotten, Historia's hesitation shed away by the ever-growing blush she now had.

"I-I just got a little carried away then, that's all...!" The heat warming her insides and surface as she realised that was what he had been wishing to tease her about.

Just as Mikasa stepped in right before them, stomping her feet onto the ground.

Trying to suppress any other feelings she could not comprehend right now, her face revealed only how unamused and displeased she was.
But Historia wasn't finished.

"Besides! What's amazing is how you can say to your Queen that you've just come in one day to just touch her!" Historia tried biting back at Eren, who smirked back in challenge.

Mikasa froze. Not moving an inch from where she had just stepped down.

"You ought to get your head out of the gutter if that's the first thing you start thinking, or you won't be any good as Queen" Eren replied, trying to keep his cool.

The two kept walking forward right towards Mikasa, and then –

They went right around the raven haired girl, Historia going round the left and Eren going round the right.

"Hm?" Historia coyly smirked, "you must have some experience then when it comes to turning up at people's doors and saying you've come to touch them without anything else said."

Like avoiding a street lamp on the path, both of them subconsciously registered the obstacle and without breaking eye contact or stopping their conversation, they simply walked round both of its flanks.

"You don't need to fear," Eren mocked, playing along with the story, "my hands are only for you to hold."

They honestly hadn't even seen Mikasa at all, and didn't think it was even a person.

Aside from registering something in the way of the path, they had been too absorbed in their talk to pay any actual attention.

"Oh really? Will you swear on your Queen's life that she is the first woman to hold pure, untouched hands with you?" Historia asked smugly.

"Yeah, I swear on my loyalty to and on the Queen's life," Eren said as they kept walking side by side, lightly nudging each other after every line, "and the very Queen who once said she was humanity's worst enemy."

"A-Ah hey! Why is it back to that now?!" Historia broke the rhythm as it all came full circle, her attempt at diverting the conversation failing as she realised she had gotten too immersed as they talked forgot to bring the topic on Eren's change in behaviour.

He had been there in that cave… simply crying… completely unlike himself and a reflection of her…

Well, it's not something she had any reason to bring up, though if Eren was going to try making fun of the things

'Enemies of humanity huh...’ Historia remembered what she said in the moment. She was about to properly talk again about it when Mikasa snapped back into reality, turning right round to where they had walked off to in the midst of their conversation, and quickly catching up.

The distance they crossed while immersed in each other was completed in half the time through Mikasa's fearsome strides.

Neither Eren nor Historia felt her presence while they talked, when all of a sudden, the Ackerman
in question suddenly stepped right in front of them, turning right around from Eren's back.

"AH! M-Mikasa?" Both Eren and Historia said the exact same words with a similar honest jolts of surprise at her appearance

"Don't scare us like that," Eren told her. Before then turning to Historia, and trying to walk around Mikasa, "but you know that —"

"Eren!" Mikasa cut him off, stepping right down in front of the pair again. Why were they so keen to get into a discussion right now?

What had they been doing behind closed doors all alone?! Experiments?! Touching each other?!

Mikasa's mind was practically in overload, while she tried to calm herself down.

"Yeah, what's wrong?" Eren asked her innocently, wishing to go back to teasing Historia once again on pointless and disconnected topics.

"…!" The cogwheels in Historia's head started to turn as she understood what she had been doing. She didn't know when Mikasa had spotted them, but clearly it had been a good chunk of them together.

Mikasa's expression… was not to be taken lightly. Historia felt a never before felt emotion, bubbling inside of her. The dark grey eyes which despite holding a familial warmth most of the time, seemed distant and simply displeased.

Historia decided to back down. She wasn't going to hurt Mikasa over some misunderstanding. They had never been particularly close at all, and Historia still struggled to grasp at the emotions of Krista and whether her relationships with the other former 104th cadets was even appropriate anymore.

"Gimme that," Mikasa said before grabbing the 3 large sacks of wares which Eren had been carrying, easily placing them onto her shoulder. "You're tired from training."

"Hey, wait…" Eren tried reaching out as the weight was lifted off his arms, everything which he had been struggling to carry a little being hoisted up so easily.

"Of course…" Historia said as well, trying to address the girl and apologise to her, "sorry, Mikasa."

Mikasa made no reply and took no notice of what Historia said before turning swiftly round and taking the lead.

"Stop treating me like some old man!" Eren called at her as he walked back up to beside Historia, with Mikasa just a pace ahead of them.

Historia examined the raven haired girl, trying to look for an opening to explain. She wondered what Eren and her looked like to Mikasa.

'Mikasa… we're just friends, really… just… just… friends…' Historia thought desperately. Yet an unknown part of her, reminding her of the connection that she and Eren had talked about, felt… it was something different.

Some unknown selfish part of her, telling her to stand her ground and push back against the girl if the time came to it.
"Eh…?" Historia muttered, as suddenly the cargo crate was pulled out from her arms. She looked over to the dark haired boy next to her, now carrying the crate.

"Ah… um… uh…" Historia had began, wishing to likewise repeat Mikasa's comment as well. He surely must be tired. But once she saw the look on the face, she completely decided against doing so. No, repeating what Mikasa said never even crossed her head.

It had been tossed aside the instant she said it, knowing that Eren didn't want to hear it. She didn't like seeing him so tired all the time, however knowing that he wanted to help around stopped her from even considering saying otherwise.

Mikasa turned her head around, noticing how Eren had picked up the crate for himself and scowling intensely at them both as she turned and approached again. "Gimme that, stop pushing yourself."

Mikasa dropped the 3 heavy sacks off her shoulder, on top of the crate before quickly grabbing the bottom of the crate this time, picking up everything stacked on top of each other, from Eren's hands before the weight would take over.

Mikasa was now carrying everything, turning away as she walked in the direction of the storehouse, leaving Eren and Historia without anything to carry at all.

Mikasa could easily manage the weight, her Ackerman strength giving her everything that she needed. She didn't like it. She didn't like how Eren would not pay attention to himself sometimes.

She didn't understand why he was like that. But that didn't matter. It was because he was like that, that she wasn't going to break the last promise she made to Eren's mother.

The black haired girl contemplated her feelings for Eren. A brother? A childhood friend? A future lover?

Mikasa knew what she felt for Eren. She was going to take care of Eren always just like she promised. Eren needed to be protected.

She would protect him. No matter what.

Mikasa turned back round, not hearing any pair of footsteps behind her.

They had both disappeared.

Leaving only the fluttering of leaves blown down across the countryside hills in the dusk.

~2001

\*

They had lounged around for the entire afternoon, but when evening came, the boy was the one reading the book, and the girl was the one collecting sticks.

They were doing each other's customs for the evening, just for the fun off it.

Honestly, they were really just messing around for the whole day.

Dusk came as it always did, appearing sooner the closer that winter came. They had been silently enjoying themselves for the whole day, not talking too each other apart from their greetings.
It was now time for saying 'see you next time' now. They both spoke at the same time –

– "Hey, why do you always come to collect sticks from here?"
– "Hey how come you always come to read beneath this tree?"

Eren Jaeger was born into this world.

…

What was it that it really meant for him?

What was it that he truly meant whenever he said that?

…

Eren saw it. The earth beneath him was changing.
A land that did not belong anywhere inside the walls.
There was no walls for this pen.
Because it wasn't a cattle's home.
Beyond the walls.
Beyond the ocean.
Beyond… and beyond…
The sky was above him, and the clouds of various shapes and sizes flying across the sky…
The impossible sun was both dawning and dussking at the same time.
He was in the woods, as the leaves fell with amber hue.
The winds breezing through.
The birds…
Resting gently after their great flight.
All of them…
This was… the end of the road…
Of course it was.
This place was –

Also welp damn, that's a 1 month update, late once more thrice in a row now annoyingly…
should I even be saying that I'll try getting the next chapter out in 2 weeks time with this streak lol? (also its too long again... basically it seems whenever its an extra week later, there's another several thousand words of drabble, but yeah!) Also, who knew that eating 500g of sugar straight from the packet in the span of 30 minutes is not always a good idea!

That being said, I'll try getting next chapter out in a fortnight(and this time an actually shorter chapter) and... still waiting for the confirmation scene I need... that's over half a year now! But yeah chapter 113.... Eren and Zeke.... Them having arranged a time and place to meet is interesting to here and annoying to not know lol, but kind of exactly because this didn't happen canonically, I'll no doubt go down this route when we reach this point (in like 9 - 10 months worth of chapters lmao)

And then comes in the theme of "understanding" and Eren looking outside the window thinking about someone... honestly it was a pretty weird coincidence when that's kind what this fanfic chapter is about but yeah.... Also, please my man Shadis... protect him! He's so precious to me! (I'm seriously not joking though, protect him! Zeke too! Though... its a little late...)

But wow also congratulations to Isayama for getting married (am I sensing more EreHisu hinting or is Isayama's waifu going to be real life Eren/Historia with the heights swapped round... I'm losing it... assuming I ever had it...) Also sheesh, chapter 112... I don't need to say anything lol, we saw what happened and... sheesh... EreMika and EreMin, just sheesh... the latter I like as a bromance a lot, but sheesh... just sheesh...

But yeah, also chapter wise, there will be more hand holding sessions next chapter, flashbacking back to the EreHisu relationship developing, since yeah... I seem to be useless at writing the type of content I want the most lol, I guess... maybe its that exact reason why... hmm, I'll think about it and seek to improve! (And I'll hopefully properly get some other character perspectives in on EreHisu this time round!)

Also also, a very late Merry Christmas, to y'all that celebrate it, and Happy New Year as well to everyone! Annoyed that I couldn't get it out around that time then but alas!

Also also also, bless Isayama once more for getting married this year, and I swear, someone put down by tingling EreHisu sense (AHH!)

Ending Scene: WARNING MANGA SPOILERS - CONTAINS SPOILERS FOR SEASON 4 (OR WHAT WILL BE SEASON 4 AT LEAST)

He should have been fighting already.

The wounded soldier was ready.

Read to return.

He felt weak, still very weak.

But he wanted to see him again... and then everything would start.

The festival was approaching.
Thinking.

Thinking of so many things he could never have thought of before…

But he was content for now to feel the last bit of relative content before he would return to the cage he escaped from.

He was always going to go back.

But this time, he was going to back and destroy that cage.

"Hey Mr Kruger, would you like the rest?" the young blond boy asked from beside him on the usual bench by the wall, as he held out a glass bottle of the flavoured sugary drink. "I don't think I will be able to finish it. And I don't want to drink too much before the last test."

The wounded soldier looked at it cautiously, and then in wonder. Yet another thing which likely only existed on this continent.

"If you don't mind… Thanks Falco," The man said, reaching out as the young boy enthusiastically held out the bottle, still half full.

The elder sometimes thought he was being far too cruel with how much he owed the young boy. But it was too late now. He had to continue down this path now.

And someday… maybe this boy… shall…

The wounded soldier sniffed the inside of it quickly, wondering at what exactly it was. He brought the glass to the lips and took a sip.

Sweet, abnormally sweet. Some sort of fruit? He couldn't fathom a guess.

"Um, Mr Kruger… I was… just wondering if you don't mind me asking… I was thinking about Gabi and… the future from now…" Falco said to the elder man, watching how he seemed to be pleasantly drinking on it, peeling his eye back towards the boy for a moment as the younger boy nodded for him that it was really fine to finish it all.

He was drinking it deeply.

"And I was wondering… when… how exactly… did you… fall in love with the one waiting for you at home?" The young boy asked innocently.

"PFFFFFFT!" The elder man promptly spewed out the drink and began coughing uncontrollably, shuddering through his entire body for a little while.

"A-Ah!" The young boy panicked for a moment, seeing the man struggling. And then…

Then he saw it.

Falco saw that sincere smile for the first time.

Happy, sad, bittersweet, tragic, dark.

It seemed to match all those descriptions but at the same time none.

As if hating himself and loving someone else.
He wasn't certain what to make of it exactly.

But he knew at least that it was different than what the boy had.

The young boy had never seen a more real smile before.

It had been a loaded question, only to see if it was okay to ask about that topic.

Something special that lingered in the wounded man's remaining eye…

...  

A connection which bound them together…

Something both friend and lover...

They were each other's – "Soulmates..."
Woah… chapter 115 was what I had been yearning for some of for so long and what I wanted. But chapter 119 and 120 was what I needed without knowing so lol. But AT LONG LAST, FINALLY WE GET THE GODDESS PROGENITOR! Sheesh, it's been 5 and a half years of waiting on the hints, have no idea how the original manga readers could have gone almost 10 years worth of foreshadowing lol, but FINALLY! Still though, time to await what will be shown of Eren's POV soon TM I wish, but yeah… wow getting his head blasted off was epic haha.

But eh… 10 year anniversary of the manga...

(But dammit… why'd she have to be in loli mode! I can't use my waifunometer yet and start my new shipping stuff… ugh, give me the adult version already!) But it's great there's a better sense of direction of the events 2000 years ago or whatever time period this exists as depending on what route Isayama is going to take the relationship between Eren/Zeke to the First, but it's content I wanted from the start haha, but now Eren's POV is the new number 1 need for me lol.

Discord invite: discord.gg/csQFFUC
"speech"

'thoughts' - Italic

Chapter 10 – Sonnensteine und 'nur Freundschaft'

, ~2001

"I think you should change that name," the boy finally said after faking a smile for each time his friend always talked about it happily.

"Eh? What's wrong with 'HappilyEverAfterLand'?!" the blonde girl demanded. She was quite fond of the name for some reason.

"I dunno, it just seems… like a weird name," he answered awkwardly, shrugging his shoulders and deciding to stand up, dusting the dirt of his clothes a little.

"Muu, what's a better name then?" she pouted back at him, feeling quite bitter, but deciding to listen to her only friend's opinion.

"I don't know, maybe... something like..." the boy scratched his head, gazing up the sky again, "...
Paradise."

It was a familiar and commonly used name.

"Eh? But... that's the name of..." the girl trailed off. Everyone knew that story.

"Yeah, but... you can just change it or something... get rid of the last couple letters or something..." he suggested off the top of his head, "just make it sound different... if it sounds different, then you're not disobeying that law..."

She wandered around a bit, kicking at the ground unhappily.

"Fine then, let's go discover this 'Paradise' then," she huffed, and slumped down on the grass next to him, "but HappilyEverAfterLand still sounds better."

"Sure," he smirked at her, then noticing the cloth that was in just as bad of a condition as both their clothes. "Hey, you dropped this."

"Oh, thanks," taking notice, she tried moved to grab her cloth.

"Turn your head, I'll tie it around you," the boy suggested, motioning her around.

She did as he said, pulling up the sides of her hair to allow the boy to loop it all around her temples.

"Ow! Not so tight idiot," she whined at him for pulling the band together so strongly.

"If you don't do it like this, then it will just fall off again idiot," the boy argued back. At this point, calling each other 'idiot' was more friendly affection than anything else.

He tested it again, before letting go of the tie and the girl let her hair drop over. The knot was pulled firmly and tight enough so that it wouldn't fall off.

"Thanks," she turned round and smiled at him, brushing a few strands of hair out from her only signature headband.

1

Eren had fallen asleep that night after returning from Historia's coronation. He had wished to speak to her more but accepted that there was no helping it when he closed his eyes.

When he opened them again, he was in that same darkness once more.

The inability to move his body which floated through the space on it's own.

He realised this time how his senses seemed to be awaken, as though they stretched beyond his body and into the space itself. He could feel something moving in the darkness.

The land formed and he suddenly realised that he had his body this time. Not just spine and skull, his actual body seemed to have materialized properly now.

Eren breathed as he felt his feet able to walk again, despite not seeing anything. There was no light anywhere but he could feel as though he was walking on some grainy soil.

Someone's silhouette could be seen in the direction following it, some 30 meters or so away.
His eyes burnt strangely, and he seemed to be able to see in the darkness.

After hesitating for a moment, not having anywhere else to go, he walked forward towards the silhouette.

The world seemed to be a slightly lighter colour now. The closer he went, the brighter is seemed to get. The sky was lit in a still dim glow and he noticed that he was walking on some strange soil without life on it.

'… What is this… again…' It reminded him of the endless sand dunes in the pictures of the desert that Armin showed him. Some sort of rocky soil that had worn down into a grain like feeling.

But it didn't feel the same. He had never trodden on sand but he could feel the absence of anything in the ground.

It was like dust.

Endless horizons of dust in the darkness.

Eren blinked as he confirmed what he had seen. There was someone right in front of him, only a couple feet from where he stooped over. The person had noticed him.

Looking closer, he sensed that it was a girl who had her back to him. Her clothing looked wrought and ancient.

'What's she doing…' Eren wondered as he hesitated in making another step to the girl who was sitting on the ground.

He couldn't see her face at all as she was turned away from him and seemingly drawing something on the ground with her finger dragging in random directions.

She stopped after a little while without Eren doing anything and got up to her short height. He paused as he watched her turn her feet and go at an angle to him, not registering his existence at all.

"Hey!… Who are you…?" Eren called out to her as she passed him and began leaving somewhere.

He was sure he had asked the same thing the last time he was here.

The girl didn't reply.

Taking a breath, Eren stepped forward to try and catch up to the girl who seemed to stare at the ground. It only took a couple steps to reach her when she stopped.

"Hey… what's happening to me right now," Eren asked, not sure why he expected the girl to have an answer.

He would like to pass it off as a strange dream but it felt too familiar to some time ago. 'The cave that day…' he tried to remember how long ago that was despite it only having been a few days.

She grabbed his fingers wordlessly, and pulled at his arm suddenly.

Eren had missed the movement entirely and could hardly feel any strength behind it.

Her eyes and face were turned to the floor, unable to look up, not knowing if she was avoiding his face or could see something in the ground.
He let her lead him, following silently at the frail touch.

It felt familiar.

Pulling at the sleeve of his arm so gently, he was being led through the darkness now.

It felt familiar.

He could hardly tell but he was sure that her hair was blond, and there seemed to be some appendage in it.

It felt a little less familiar.

But he let his thoughts wander aloud.

"… His… toria…? Is that you…?"

The girl didn't answer or make any movement in reply.

'Could this be… some memory of Frieda's…?' Eren glanced at his hands and clothes. He noticed how his eyes blurred the further he looked away from the girl and couldn't tell who he was.

Able to move his body in response to his own will however, didn't feel right for it to have been Historia's elder sister.

He stared at the girl, leading him through the darkness with one hand.

Historia's image kept filling his mind and he kept being unable to disconnect the two individuals.

He had seen enough of Frieda's memories and from Historia herself to recall how she appeared when she was young and forced around by her grandparents.

'Dammit… if only I could see her face…' Eren tried to lean just now but his spine refused to move.

As if stuck into it's spot, he couldn't bend himself down at all and see the girl's face.

Eren was convinced that this wasn't some memory at all either.

This world was not natural.

The girl stopped moving.

They had arrived at something buried onto the ground.

Eren blinked as the girl let go and approached it.

He was frozen to his spot and he panicked for a little, unable to move as the girl left him for a little.

He heard sounds of some liquid splashing as the girl leaned down to what appeared to be some bucket and had put her hands into it.

She raised up again and Eren watched, able to turn his head again now but nothing more.

The girl moved at right angles to the right of him and the bucket. She stopped after a few steps and went on her knees on the ground again.

She was drawing something on it again with her finger, seemingly just like when he found her.
"Subject F-154-A-169."

The girl spoke for the first time.

Her voice was devoid of life or childish presence or feeling.

"… What?" Eren pondered on what she just said, realising that she was calling him by a strange string of syllables, "no, my name's Eren…Jaeger."

The girl still didn't respond to him.

Nothing he did seemed to reach her.

She suddenly got up again and moved away, back towards him without one looking up at him. Raising her skinny arm, she pointed slowly to the ground where she had written it.

The writing became etched into Eren's eyes as he realised it was some sort of combination of letters and numbers that were meant as his identification or perhaps a passcode of some kind. He read it again. F-154-A-169. He repeated it to memorise it instinctively. The dash marks seemed to indicate some sort of spacing that were not familiar to him. He had never particularly paid much attention to writing in class when they were training to fight.

Eren briefly considered what this 'subject' suddenly was meant to be to, but turned to the girl again, feeling himself able to speak again.

"Hey… what does this… all of this mean…? Who's… memory is this…?" Eren desperately pleaded for answers. He wasn't of royal blood and therefore he couldn't use the Founding Titan's full capabilities. Yet it had briefly worked with Historia.

The name of his now close friend kept repeating again.

Yet the girl still didn't reply.

Eren considered calling after her but this time of his own choice, he felt an unbreakable wall around her. He was unable to break through nor understand what she was even thinking nor doing here.

His thought and reason struggled to keep up with each other and he began feeling sleepy again, stumbling and catching himself

"… You… will be the last subject here…"

Eren blinked. Was that the same voice that the girl had just used. It sounded similar yet older. He still couldn't see the girl's face or if her lips just moved.

It was stranger now. He felt like he could recognise this voice now. But it felt different from the girl entirely.

The girl was turned away from him again, moving to pick up the bucket and lift it off the ground slowly.

She looked around and didn't go anywhere as though there was something compelling her to wait before departing into the darkness again.

Eren watched her just as his eyelids closed and his visions failed.
To him, she looked so…

"Are you… alone here…?" Eren asked.

The girl replied to him for the first time.

Late Winter of the Year 841 – Shinganshina District

_He was staring up at the clouds on that day too._

_His whole body hurt._

_He couldn't go home yet._

_His mother would be mad at him, seeing the state he was in._

_It had been the first fight of his life._

_And he had lost._

…

_That fact sunk in deeper than any of the punches he had received._

_The simple fact, that he was nowhere near as strong as he would like to think he was, was inescapable._

_No matter how much he would like to envision himself to be, the reality hurt that he was far from invincible._

_Eren had limped over to his usual spot at the riverside after the three bullies had left at last. He had been struggling to remain conscious from his face feeling as though it had been punched everywhere._

_His fingers and knuckles were scraped, stinging and bleeding. His head hurt from a ringing sound and his joints ached as though they had been overstretched._

_He wiped the tears from his eyes, feeling them only become more irritated by doing so. He didn't want for anyone to see him crying and start making fun of him again._

_The 6 year old boy felt pain coming from all parts of his body as far as he could tell. And it didn't stop. He tried rubbing and soothing itself, but still the pain refused to leave._

_He heard a few people walk by him and whisper, while Eren wished to hide himself from everyone right now. He didn't want anyone to see him and let the whispers spread._

_The afternoon past and the sun began to set already._

_He had wanted to sit and watch it for longer._

_He wished the sunset took longer._

_The longer it took, the longer he could stay here._

'I don't need anyone…'
The thought tried to settle in his mind but refused to rest. Eren's ears twitched as he heard another set of footsteps, stop abruptly behind him and he began feeling unsettled.

"Eren..." he heard his name spoken and stopped rubbing his sore spots to turn around and look behind him, "what happened to you?"

His father was standing behind him. Still wearing his working clothes, and travelbag, Eren's bespectacled father quickly began approaching now as he noticed that his son was hurt.

Turning, over his shoulder, a faint relief went through his green eyes when he realised that it wasn't his mother. Eren turned his head away quickly when his father kneeled down, placed his work bag aside and carefully brushed over his wrist to bring it up.

He heard his father utter a curse silently and began holding his arm gently while looking over it swiftly. Moving quickly to open his workbag and bring out a canister that he heard liquid moving inside of and some wool.

All the while, Eren sat through it without saying anything. He tried looking away as he felt it get batted down on him gently and winced at the stinging, and he knew that it was clear he had gotten into a fight.

"Eren? You won't tell me anything?" his father confirmed, thinking of a different angle of approach, "... there's no shame in admitting that you lost, son."

"Who said that I lost?!" Eren immediately shot back, turning away to face the opposite direction now that his father had gone to wiping off the blood scratches on his left side now.

"Laying here like this by your spot on the riverside where nobody can see you, doesn't tell me that things went well for you," his father broke into a tender smile, "you shouldn't be getting into fights if you're trying to make friends."

That had been the pretence under which he had been allowed to go around town instead of being cooped up at home for any longer.

"... Please don't tell mom." He requested, picturing her face.

"Why?" his father, Grisha, asked.

"Just... because... I don't know... just don't tell her, I don't want her to know..." Eren's words fell short, struggling to say the real reason.

His father sighed softly, a mixed expression on his face that showed his acceptance to it. "Alright then, we'll say you had an accident, deal?"

Eren nodded, relaxing his body a little more, as he carefully undid his shoes as his father reached down and carefully examined his ankles. Both were strained red, but only his right had been sprained slightly.

"So, since it'll be just between us, won't you tell me what happened?" Pulling out a bandage roll, Grisha suggested.

"..." his son pursed his lips. "... It was a draw, I didn't lose."

"Alright," his father chuckled a little and shook his head slightly, "it was a draw then. But how did it start?"
"Like mom said... I tried making friends..." Thinking back to his morning, he scoffed at his thoughts, "but the kids here are jerks... they're just stupid... I can't stand them, they should be taught a lesson."

His father smiled sadly hearing that.

It hadn't taken long before the fight had broken out. The 3 kids who were all a couple years older than him, had come across him strolling and immediately antagonised him.

He had been wondering around the city, feeling that these weren't the sort of characters he wanted to involve with. There were a few kids his age around the place but they all seemed to part of their own friend groups already, and Eren didn't know how to open a conversation in at all.

He wasn't shy at all. But thinking how these kids may turn out to be just the same kept stopping him. The moment he had stepped out, it felt like there was a fence between them that was not worth crossing.

"Well... what would a true best friend be like to you?"

The question clicked with his chain of thought when his father asked him.

"..." Eren went silent and turned away again, looking at the river, "I don't know..."

The brunette boy looked about and stared up at the sky again.

A true best friend.

"... They have to fight back..."

Someone like him...

"... I don't want to be friends with someone who just cowers away from a fight," Eren scowled at the thought, feeling annoyed by it, "I'd never be friends with someone who just runs to ask someone else to save them."

Eren's father held a soft, uncertain look, "is that why you don't want to tell me what happened? You don't want to trouble someone else with it?"

"Wh- No! I don't need anyone's help in a fight!" Eren stubbornly refused, twitching a little unhappily as the soft stinging wipe that was being dabbed on one of his cuts.

"Honestly son..." Grisha commented to his unhappy son, while chuckling slightly, "relying on someone doesn't make you weak, nor does sharing your struggles burden someone."

"... I don't need a friend like that," Eren replied, refusing to change his reply.

"So you say," his father gave a knowing smile, "so, back to square one, besides that, what sort of friend would you get along with."

"... If they're my friend... then... they should understand certain things without me having to tell them," Eren said while he stuck out his leg for bandaging.

"Hm, that's quite difficult sometimes, but they'll need to get to know you better first for that, so you'll have to get along with them before that," pointed out the doctor, wrapping the ankle firmly with the bandage but not strong enough to hurt his son.
"... Well... I'll only get along with them, if they're nice to me... they can't pretend to just be nice to me, they have to be properly nice to me for real!" his son exclaimed, pouting soon after.

"Well that's more... reasonable," his father approved this time, nodding his head accepting it more this time.

Eren nodded, while pulling up his shirt a little, to where he had been kicked multiple time. He heard his father hiss under his breath and seem even a little angry for once.

"Also, they need to be fine with spending time with me..." he murmured more timidly, feeling the bruises brushed over him.

His father picked him up gently by his hips and sat him up sidewards on his lap, while soothingly holding his son to his chest and bringing out more plasterings. "That does sound like something a friend would do."

"Oh, and they must never tell lies!" The green eyed boy said.

Grisha laughed a little, adjusting his glasses, "sometimes people lie for a very important reason. Like maybe to hide a happy surprise for you or to keep you out from danger from knowing something that could land you into serious trouble."

"But... b... I don't care! They're not allowed to lie to me if we're best friends!" Eren grumbled and let waddled his feet against the ground, "... they can't lie to me ever. I hate being hidden things from... they can't do that if they want to be my friend... unless... unless it's an obvious lie... that I can see through and see the truth easily, then... that's alright... I guess. I'll forgive them then.... maybe. But they can't go trying to trick me..."

"How about I carry you home now," his father shook his gently after a little while. Eren nodded his head acceptingly, "we can talk about it more on the way if you think of anything else, but let's get you into bed after dinner tonight."

His father pressed a kiss to his head and rubbed his arm up and down a little, before placing his son carefully on the thin grass again to gather up his things.

"I can walk though," Eren insisted, about to try and stand, but his father shook his head and pressed his shoulder down gently.

"You pulled a muscle in your leg, don't move too much alright?" the bespectacled man arranged his glasses as he still kneeled down on the ground, "... they can't move too much... I hate being hidden things from... they can't do that... unless... unless it's an obvious lie... that I can see through and see the truth easily... that's alright... I guess. I'll forgive them then.... maybe. But they can't go trying to trick me..."

"How about I carry you home now," his father shook his gently after a little while. Eren nodded his head acceptingly, "we can talk about it more on the way if you think of anything else, but let's get you into bed after dinner tonight."

His father pressed a kiss to his head and rubbed his arm up and down a little, before placing his son carefully on the thin grass again to gather up his things.

"I can walk though," Eren insisted, about to try and stand, but his father shook his head and pressed his shoulder down gently.

"You pulled a muscle in your leg, don't move too much alright?" the bespectacled man arranged his glasses as he still kneeled down on the ground, closing his bad and turning around to pat his shoulders, "put your arms allowed me alright, and don't move your legs."

The emerald eyed boy nodded and shuffled forward a little to wrap his arms around his father, who placed his hands beneath his knees and slowly tucked in his son's legs before grabbing his bag and standing up slowly.

"Are you alright, Eren?" He briefly felt a nod and his 6 year old son rearranging his grip over his shoulders, and breathing a little into his long-ish hair that was pushed to his back. "Tell me if you're struggling to remain hold, alright?"

The father set off, carrying his son on his back as they headed home in the bright setting sun that Eren focused upon while tilting his head to the side and leaning it on his father's back.

It's colour entrallled him, and soothed his bothered mind a little.
"Thoughts returning to what was troubling him.

"… Will that day ever come?" He asked his father.

"Hm? You mean when you start making friends?" Grisha assumed by the slight movement.

"I don’t need friends… just one… true… best… friend… just one true best friend is all I need…"

"… Who knows… Perhaps it'll take a long time, but I believe you'll find someone like that, rather I hope you find more than just one… you can always have two best friends…"

"… But… you can’t… only one of two best friends would be a… bester… best friend some way…"

"… Well… if that's what you think… but… I'm sure you'll find at least one person then…"

"… Really? … What if… that day never comes…?"

"If it doesn’t then… I’m sure you can find a way…"

"… Okay… But like you promised, you can't tell mom about this…"

"Yes I did. Don't worry son, I promised. It was an accident, remember?"

...

"… A true best friend…"

"Hm?"

...

"… A true best friend is specially connected to me forever…"

...

---

**Mid Fall of the Year 850 – Royal Palace**

"How often do you keep seeing that?" Historia asked.

He didn't reply, and yet he gave the answer to her.

"See what?" a third voice spoke, cutting the two out of their not so secret entrancé.

Eren turned around, remembering who was here this time since he had gotten in enough trouble already.

"Ah, I was… the day when he saw that sight… I was just asking Eren…” Historia looked away from Jean and stared back to their clasped hands.

Holding hands once more. Alone they held no thought nor regard for what they were doing. Yet adding a third person into the equation, however familiar they were with, seemed to put them both on edge all of a sudden.

It was a very different feeling to be holding hands while chatting random and sometimes embarrassing things to each other while trying to deal with the boredom and not start tripping each other up for fun.
"Hey, see what?" Jean sounded a little annoyed, "I don't get what you're talking about without saying anything unlike you two weirdos."

"'Weirdos'…?" Historia suddenly looked back at him with a dangerous and authoritative tone, her face revealing no menace, only coldness.

"A-Ah, I mean… s-sorry your Highness," Jean got nervous as he came to face with the only two people in the room, becoming a stumbling mess, "I j-just meant, it's… unusual how you two seem to get along all of a sudden, like Kris— no, His—, s-sorry your Highness was… like… before… now… you… different… this guy here… he's the… weirdo…"

The light brunette eventually just clamped his mouth shut and then turned away, opening up the book that Historia had suggested him to read earlier while they had sat around in silence and the atmosphere became awkward with Jean just staring at the two of them, unable to say anything comfortably to each other.

None of the three had talked aside from their entry greetings, after which they followed into one of Historia's personal studies and sitting down at two different tables. Apparently her bedroom was too big for Jean to fit it all of a sudden – not that Historia said that allowed, only told Eren through her knowing look.

Eren and Historia had simply sat down opposite each other and clasped hands together while looking at each other, feeling Jean's inquisitive gaze on them and then shut their eyes, pretending to be focusing on something in the darkened world.

Jean then did try to be helpful in suggesting things to his credit, none of which was particularly useful as they had all tried it during their first few meetings – when Eren had ditched Jean thrice over, only landing Jean with the duty of cleaning the Scouts Headquarters courtesy of Captain Levi.

For some reason Jean was beginning to wonder whether this was some bad case of luck or if someone was pulling his leg constantly.

"… Don't call Eren a weirdo," Historia simply stated, before turning back and smiling to Eren.

"Y-Yes your Majesty," Jean coughed awkwardly as he tried to pretend that he wasn't there.

Eren rolled his eyes and returned a small smile to Historia, telling her that he didn't mind.

"Why is it always me that has to go…” Jean mumbled a little louder. Looking at Eren and Historia and the smirks they kept sharing got on his nerves a little. He wondered if they thought they were being subtle or if they had teamed up to annoy him for some reason. "I'm way more reliable than Sasha or Connie at least."

"Well Jean, protecting Eren is a pretty important job," the Queen pointed out, nudging herself to him, as Jean wondered how they seemed to be fine with each other in their own personal space. "It shows that the commander trusts you that much."

"I'm the one that's protecting him though," Eren interjected. He was the one with Titan power after all and the better combatant. "It's fine Jean, that just shows you how important it is to keep our pony princess safe."

"Knock it off bastard, how many times have you gotten kidnapped if it weren't for us coming to save you," the taller soldier smacked his book closed on the table.

"That's… different now," the Titan shifter became a little more uncertain and began to mellow
down instantly again after his attempt at teasing Jean rebounded into a serious atmosphere again. They both heard light sighing coming from their Queen who coughed into her hand suddenly and looked normal in an instant. "You know, you two really could be good friends if -"

"No way in hell," they replied simultaneously, instantly moving to glare at each other for saying the same thing.

"Uhh..." the young Queen sighed again and continued, "but you managed to work together to -"

"That was one time, years ago," Eren pointed out, shrugging his shoulders, "besides I'd have managed to save Krist- you, Krista, myself."

"Hey you bastard," Jean began again and stopped, "who was it that... no... wait, when did you two get so close..."

He blinked for a second as he considered the name Eren had spoken strangely. "... The hell was that?" he pondered looked weirdly at Eren. The two shared a look between them again. 'What's with that Krista – you... no, why the hell does he just call her 'you' at all...'

"... What are you talking about?" Eren stared at him. For a second Jean thought he was denying whatever was going on.

"You know exactly... what... I..." Jean examined their faces closely. He could feel an odd feeling going through him. As if their stares were piercing him in some strange way. And he realised that they were looking at him confused. "... You were... you know... not so close... I-I don't think you were at least..."

The Titan shifter and the Queen glanced at each other and returned to staring at him again. The odd feeling suddenly returned and Jean felt uncomfortable now. They were looking at him as if it were natural, as if they had always been this close.

"... Nothing, forget I said anything," he turned away, feeling almost as if he had been forced to, "I just... never saw you close with anyone except Ymir..."

At least he was sure that Eren and her were never like this before. And yet... met by their two stares, he suddenly wasn't so sure of himself.

"Yeah, I... was," the Queen spoke in agreement, "... Eren was... with... Reiner... and Annie and Bertholdt too...

Jean twitched a little and settled down. He shuffled a little, not understanding where she was going with this in regards to the two in question. "Yeah but... they're not here now... but..."

"Yeah... they've left..." she continued.

Jean glanced at Eren who remained silent, staring at the table. He was often silent like that at the headquarters when Armin and Mikasa approached him.

'... Are they not going to give me an answer...?' Jean struggled to grasp with how little Eren responded to him most of the time now, unless it was here. When Historia was around him -

"... Aren't you the same in that way Jean?" Her voice was no angel's like he had thought on occasion to himself, "losing the person closest to you... changes a lot of things about you..."
Only half a face.
"…" His eyes went downcast.
He remembered it clearly still.
But he could tell it was his face.
It had only been a couple months ago.
Only half the story could be seen written on his half eaten body.
His best friend's body became ash overnight.
There was no way to find out what happened.
Twin unicorn horns disappeared in the fire.
Within it, he could never find out who's body was whom.
And he became unable to turn away from the glow of the wings of a phoenix.
"…" He picked the book up again and opened it. "… Yeah."
They continued in silence before Eren said something quietly to Historia and they began chatting away in their own little world.
Jean didn't pay attention to them, focusing only in the words written in front of him. Some story about a bird called a 'phoenix' that must have soaked into his daydream.
A bird of rebirth.
"Hey, how about we go to the gardens next time," the Queen suggested with a thought in the background.
For some reason, it felt almost like two siblings thinking on the same wavelength so much that they seem like one.
A bird that was like a servant of the sun.

"I… didn't lose…"
"… What?"
"… Because… I didn't run away…"
*It was the first time when the hopeful feeling went through him.*
"You... What's your name?"

---

**Early Fall of the Year 850 – Wall Rose Survey Corps Base**

Eren looked up at the cave before him. He was in a place far away from any villages in the Wall Rose territory so he wouldn't disturb anyone.
It was about 20 meters tall and 18 meters wide. Certainly larger than his Titan form on the first occasion. He had been practicing every other day to his full capacity.

Recently he had only been able to complete one full Titan transformation consecutively. The second would be smaller, a 13 metre tall Titan.

The day before yesterday, he had managed at last to form a second 15 metre Titan form right after exiting his previous hardened skeleton. It took about half an hour to get himself out since he had hardened over his nape too much. He had been exhausted and was lacking the strength to pull out the second time.

But he had managed it. ‘Right now… I can use my full Titan power twice at most,’ the brunet reviewed what Hanji had told him. ‘And I can't stay prolonging in an inactive state for too long…’

He had realised a different focus of his power: Visualization.

He always had to transform with a goal in mind. Straying from that goal, made his Titan slowly lose control. But accomplishing a single task wasn't enough, he needed to be multi-purposeful with his abilities in a fight.

‘In other words…’ The Titan shifter thought, looking up at the cave opening that would still be bigger than him after transforming.

What he needed to become.

‘The Advance itself…’

Not a Titan Hunter.

Nor a soldier. Nor a warrior.

He bit his hand and became the monster that was needed for change to happen.

For a brief moment, he saw beautiful blonde hair fly through his vision.

She was running ahead of him still. She stopped and turned so that he saw her ocean eyes.

Extending her hand towards him, he grasped it himself at stepped forward one by one.

She was pulling him in the direction they were going as he ran up to keep with her pace.

To reach where the path led.

He had to advance through the enemies blocking him.

The Advance itself.

That was the answer that she reminded him of.

Eren opened his eyes to see the cave, filled with his hardened Titan substance extended beyond his Titan body and filling up the hole completely with reinforcing branch like structures at last.

Before he realised the price of his success as he fainted, coughing up his own blood.

---

_Early Winter of the Year 843 – Shinganshina District_
"There!" The blond boy exclaimed in delight as he picked up what he and his 8 year old friend had been spending time on for the past week, "it's done!"

"Alright, let's go!" Eren called gladly, grabbing his friend by his arm carefully and pulling him, opening the door of his house fully while Armin used both his hand to carry the wooden construction.

They nodded to each other, smiled and run outside together, traveling down the empty alleyway. Eren took the lead, peaking around every corner to make sure they wouldn't run into any of the other kids before waving Armin after him once it's clear.

They chatted quietly as they run carefully, the brunet reminding his now slightly older friend to be careful of his step so he wouldn't trip and the blond replying back to look where he was going as Eren almost hit a wagon that was being pulled down the larger street.

The driver snorted and yelled something, but the two boys had already ran off without listening. There wasn't much daylight left before their parents would come looking for them for dinner.

Rushing past a group of workers on their way to the pubs, they took another corner turn to avoid the adults. The sound of streaming water reached their ears now as they approached closer to the spot in which they would always peer at the riverside.

They broke off into a section of the market square where people were beginning to close off their stores and make their last deals for the day.

"Hey, watcha kids doin'?" The garrison officer they ran by shouted after them. There was a group of four in the centre playing cards as they kept watch for any thieves skulking around.

"It's alright Mr Hannes!" Eren yelled back, not caring to voice his disapproval of the man's drinking habit when he was far too caught up by excitement. "We'll be going home soon!"

The blond man shook his head while taking another swig and marking the direction they had gone. He couldn't remember a single time when those two kids had been home on time before their parents would come asking and he would have to search for them.

"Don't be gettin' into any trouble ya hear!" Hannes called one last time even as they disappeared through another alleyway, conceding to his daily routine.

Arriving at last by the old stone wharf, Eren gasped in delight as he looked down the river and then to Armin who still held the small wooden boat which they had improvised from the books Armin's grandfather had.

Armin returned the gesture and nodded Eren further down the river. They followed it some more, running over the quays that were split by descending stairs which would be at least half submerged at high tide at this time of year.

The slight waves in the water motioned down in the same direction they were going, to the Southmost part of the district. They reached the end of the run after several minutes as at last they approached the wall again on the south side.

'If what Armin's book said is true then this river... it will take as to the ocean...' Eren remembered the words within it that Armin had read out and explained unfamiliar terms to him.

The wall blacked them and them and they could go no further past. The river however flowed on. At the wall, there were large metal bars blocking off the end of the river so that the little fishing
boats could not pass through.

The bars were big enough to let the fish swim through, up and down the flowing water, or little schools of ducks to float down.

It was probably big enough for kids like them to squeeze through so long as they managed to stay afloat, though in a few years they would grow and be too big to get through.

The river flowed on through the bars and continued freely.

'All rivers come to reach the sea, yet the sea is never to be full.'

So the book had said.

"Alright, let's do it!" Armin called to Eren again, both descending the short stairs to the river, jumping down two or three at a time.

It was the farthest bank towards the wall, as they reached just before their shoes would get wet. They looked at each other and nodded.

"Yeah..." Eren moved as Armin offered him a side of the boat to hold, "let's do it."

The boat was about a foot in length, it's bottom was shaped into a curve and lightly weighted at the centre. It had a single mast in the middle, the sail maid from light cloth and held up with string rigging.

The design was symbol as when testing it in the bathtub, if they loaded it too much, it would begin to sink or topple sideways.

The two boys nodded to each other after slowly bringing the wooden construction to the surface of the water, reach out as far as they could without letting go or falling in. "Ready?"

"Ready," Eren affirmed, checking the position so that it would flow properly downwards.

They nodded one last time, and together, let it go and be taken by the water.

It kept balance after shaking a bit, and quickly started gaining speed, pulled away down towards the exit in the wall.

"Alright!" Armin cheered, following back up the stairs, right after Eren as they chased each other, to the wall.

Eren reached it at the same time as the boat arrived at the exit, still flowing straight forward and not having shifted on it's side.

It approached the bars that were the only thing in it's way.

And it hit them.

The river had moved it at the wrong way and it had the bad luck to hit one of the bars at an angle.

"A- No!" Eren grit his teeth as he watched just as Armin reached next to him and they both realised what was about to happen.

The boat toppled, sidewards, it's mast falling into the water as it took on water from the side and became damp and heavy.
It was still being dragged outside by the current but it was already taking on water. Inside of the wooden boat’s hull, there was a single message wrapped inside for someone to read someday if they found it.

The boat sank. It had surely taken in enough water already to get to the paper message stored inside that they had written.

"Tch… dammit," Eren cursed upset. It had sunk in the end. It had managed to ride the water but it had been unable to escape the cage without becoming too damaged to continue.

"It's okay Eren… it's not the end of the world right?" Armin spoke sadly as well, trying to reassure his friend nonetheless, "at least it was working for a time right?"

The boat had been unable to ride with the flow and stay afloat and working through the river.

"But…” he bit his tongue, and kept quiet. There was no point in expressing his disappointment when it had already sank.

The result of the time spent together on it was the sunken ship.

"Eren next time, instead of a boat, let's build an air balloon!" Armin suggested, jumping on a new idea already.

"You mean… we can fly out to the world beyond the walls?" the brunette questioned, looking upwards, away from the river.

"That's right. We can build one big enough for both of us, and then we'll fly to the outside world together!" he waved his hand, and paced a perimeter to indicate the dimensions of the basket they would ride in.

A balloon big enough for them to ride in.

Eren envisioned it while smiling brightly and engaging in talks of it with his best friend.

They wouldn't be able to build anything like that right now, but someday…

Perhaps the answer was to go over the wall, instead of through them.

In the skies.

Flying up and up.

With the clouds and beyond, where only those with wings could go.

**Mid Fall of the Year 850 – Road to Wall Sina**

"You'll see what this idiot does when he's around the Queen for yourself," Jean outlined and waved his hands emphatically.

"…” Eren did not reply. He looked like he was about to open his mouth to tell Jean to be quiet but the weak feeling around him had taken hold.

The carriage on the way to the capital Mithras rolled slowly on the stone road through the interior city. The four occupants of it talked in anticipation between themselves. Until the topic landed on Eren again.
"You've been acting weird," the tallest soldier of the group repeated.

"You already said that Jean," Connie joined in after pulling something away from Sasha quickly as she tried to pull at his arm to give it back with her mouth wide open. "Eren and Historia are just getting along well, right? What's wrong with that?"

"No, I don't mean that…" Jean rubbed his eyes with the back of his palm tiredly and turned to the Titan shifter again. "… When you told us how you apparently wished for Historia to eat you and started crying… what the hell happened to you…"

The Titan shifter turned away and stared out of the window instead as they past through another small village. A few people caught his eye and looked back at him through the window as well as they went about their day.

Common people who were in favour in the new regime and now were regaining support in the soldiers they frequently were let down by.

"Yeah, Mikasa was wondering about what happened too," the huntress inputted, "she was really worried ya know?"

"Come to think of it, Armin was also saying how he had never heard of you like that," the semi-bald soldier added. "Of course he wasn't there but Mikasa told him all about it later."

"That's what I'm saying," Jean kicked Eren's leg lightly, "you told us about you losing your will to fight and all that, but you were fine during the battle right after."

Still Eren made no response. Jean clucked his tongue again, "and then there's Historia. She was completely different like she found herself or something."

"…" Eren leaned back in his corner, "that's… basically what happened."

"Tch, is that really all?" Connie and Sasha stared back and forth between the former rivals, "you and Historia… seem way too touchy-feely…"

"… That's what we're supposed to do, there's no helping that…" Eren pulled a straight face why trying to force a relaxed expression.

"Stop avoiding the subject you bastard, you know what I mean… Historia as well… you seem way too comfortable to just… lean on each other…" the light brunet huffed and jumped as the carriage wheels rolled in and out of a hole on the ground.

"It's…" Eren turned to look at the two listeners alongside them in the carriage. "it's no different from you guys, right?"

Sasha and Connie blinked and turned to each other in confusion.

"You two are like… really close, right?" Eren pressed, waving his hands for them to take his side, "When you need someone to lean on… you two support each other first as well, right?"

"Y… eah… sometimes…" Sasha and Connie looked awkward as the example. Sasha scratched her head as she nudged Connie to try and say something as well, "… yeah, like… we're… like that…"

Jean stared hard at them as though they didn't catch a single word he said. While he could see where Eren was going, he knew that his question was just getting evaded.
"Well… me and Historia are like that as well, I mean… Historia… doesn’t have anyone…” Eren continued on, "…anymore. And she’s no longer a member of the Survey Corps… she’s just… alone in the palace."

‘Not that it would change anything even if she was still amongst us…’

He had become so attached to her as of late.

His head was a mess, but he had the memories of Historia’s sister Frieda.

Her own feelings towards her half-sister.

And the wish he was sure that she held onto at the very end.

Eren could not part with the wishes from Frieda.

He didn’t think it would matter either way.

He had gotten close to Historia recently for one reason or another.

In some way, while he did feel obliged to carry on her half-sister’s wishes, he intended to stick by Historia of his own accord after all she had done for him.

He wasn’t going to leave her.

He wanted to stay close to her.

He wanted to hold her.

He wanted to hug her.

He wanted to lift her in the air and swing her all around.

Just like in the past with him and his younger half-sister.

…

"… Ah…"

…

His thought process caught up with recognising what was actually being pulled through his head.

"Nevermind. But I still don't get it… how you two got so close quickly… a couple weeks ago she was so disconnected with all of us, and now you and her just… frankly I just don't get it," Jean spoke up again, distracting him from his contemplation.

…

That's because –

"… You weren't there."

…

"No…. I guess I wasn't…" Jean shrugged in weak agreement and continued the carriage ride in silence.
Eren returned to staring out the window at the now open fields and clear blue sky.

It had just been him and her.

**3 Hours Later**

Pristine white and clean dine-ware was laid before them on the smooth wooden table that gave off a pleasant scent. The main dining table was big enough for a company of 30 or so but Historia had instead showed her the little table outside where she would go if she had time which was big enough for five in an open roof in the centre of the level.

The Queen sat quietly, unsure of whether she should begin a topic as the technical host. Connie and Sasha were talking about the palace and everything that was on the walls since they walked in for their first time into the palace.

"Hey, I bet this whole outside carpet costs more than my whole house," Sasha exaggerated, not being taken seriously by anyone. Except for Connie.

"No way, this has gotta be worth at least two!" Connie somehow looked serious. Historia realised that he was actually serious.

Jean looked like he was getting agitated by his two friends and about had enough from hearing their loud voices in his ear for the past hour. "Listen, here you two…"

She jumped a bit when her knees pumped into the legs of the person right next to her.

"Historia…?" Eren called for her as she pulled her hand away from his own palm.

"… Hm? Oh yeah, I'm fine," she drew a hand through her medium length her and realised she felt a little sickly since she woke up.

The servants walked in, dressed in maid and butler clothes, carrying trays as they laid down the cups of tea from it at each of their sides, and adjusting the seats a little for Sasha and Connie who had fawned over their make.

They quickly bowed after straitening the tablecloth and leaving fluidly. Jean got annoyed while he watched Eren and Historia look down and bring the cup of tea to their mouths in sync as though they were the same person at once. They looked at it curiously and he wondered why the Queen looked so surprised at the fragrant tea.

Looking around, they could see two pairs of guards waiting at two sets of doors and three maids waiting close to the roofed portion of the floor as if awaiting any orders.

It was their technical lunchtime and they still had the afternoon free and were set to return late in the evening.

"Hey, hey Majesty Historia… so you can like… order anything?" Connie began wondering and Sasha perked up with a happy sound.

"Um, s-sort of?" Historia suggested. She certainly could, she had been told that it's well within her power to order anything from the chefs that worked for the heads of the military and for any special imports to be made. But she had not asked before. "Just call me Historia here."

She turned her eyebrow and examined her four companions slowly. Beside her, Eren was acting
normal, glancing and catching her eyes suddenly before returning to blowing gentle on his tea and taking another sip. Jean looked like he was trying to hold something in. Connie looked somewhat thoughtful and Sasha looked like she was about to pop out of her daydream.

"H-Hey, we're friends right, Qu- Kr– Historia?" Turning to the brunette girl, she was making the same face whenever she used to beg for a share of her meals back in training camp. She would never be able to resist the pleading look even if she had intended to.

"Y-Yeah, we're… friends," the Queen nodded hesitantly but honestly, reading the waves levitating through the air, "… is… there something you'd like me to get?"

"ENOUGH PORK, BEEF AND MUTTON 'TILL COMES WINTER!" the huntress let out the salivating that she had been holding in. The table suddenly shook and Eren coughed a little as he burnt his throat.

"HEY POTATO GIRL, THINK ABOUT MORE IMPORTANT THINGS FIRST! WE NEED ACTUAL SPENDINGS FIRST!" Jean suddenly shot up and banged his fist on the table in front of the brunette soldier who looked grumpily at him. "Do you have any idea how terrifying it's been to go to Captain Levi and ask for some allowance? If the Survey Corps is actually getting funded properly now, they could spare more than a day's work by a field hand for the week!"

"Huuh?! What's wrong with you both, what about gettin' proper rooms too ourselves first? I'm sick of sleeping with your foot in my face," Connie went on downing the tea in a single gulp, oblivious to the staring contest above him, "hey Historia, you can order the commander to get us individual beds at least right?"

"I-I can t-tr– " Amidst the sudden appearing pile of requests, the Queen began feeling dizzy a little, and suddenly considering the fair requests being made.

"No wait, if we gonna have beds, we could have rooms to ourselves!" Sasha became captivated by the idea suddenly.

"Hmph, so you can think of things besides your next meal," Jean grumbled at her. Sasha pouted in return am little and was interrupted again, "Historia, you need to help us get rest days on at least the weekends! What's with the non-stop daily training idea? We'll pass out before getting the chance to see our next Titan."

The brunette then turned sharply to his old rival who had been suspiciously quiet. In fact, now that he properly looked at him, Jean felt annoyed at the casual smirk he seemed to be shooting to… Historia?

"Oh, unless you're this bastard," Jean pointed at him across the table, "then you get freetime every other day while I have to spend the evening doing cleaning your share."

Eren frowned back at him, trying to think of a counter point. Yet he couldn't respond once Jean had said his piece and the room had descended into an awkward quietness as both Sasha and Connie also awaited Eren's reply.

"… Yeah… You're right…" he simply said. Jean pulled his eyebrows again and slowly receded back into his chair, pulling back his arm without a retort, "you guys… deserve more… but don't start swarming Historia with stuff like that."

"No, it's fine… So, um… if you could write me down a list of anything else…" the young Queen decided to pick up the conversation again, "I'll… try my best to –"
"Ah, don't worry about it Historia," Jean interrupted her, waving his arms while the two beside him nodded as well, "we're not going to leech on your charity like that."

"No, no, it's not a problem to me, just…" Historia tried to reassure them, all three who seemed to be going back on their repressed wishes, "… I can't promise anything, but I'll be glad to help out if I can."

Eren watched his other three companions settle down now and become more reserved, clearly feeling they had overstepped things a bit too quickly.

"Hey Historia uh, I swear I'll pay you back for all the times you've saved me from starvation someday!" Sasha instead opted in and picked up her tea again after staring at it's scent curiously.

"No it's fine, really," Historia assured her, and picked her cup of tea up again to take a silent sip from it in contrast to Sasha's not so faint slurping.

They all took another drink from their tea and continued conversing for a while just before a maid walked forward and informed them that their lunch will be coming soon before returning to the kitchens.

"Ooh, I know!" the brunette huntress shot up and turned to the Queen who sat next to her clockwise around the table. Eren was on the other side of Historia and were noticeably closer together as Sasha shifted her chair towards the Queen, dragging it across the red carpet. "Psst Historia."

"Yeah…?" The Queen shuffled away from Eren a little and leaned her ear towards the female soldier who cupped a hand around her mouth.

Eren, Jean and Connie watched Sasha whisper into the Queen's ear hushingly and saw the wobbling eyes and contorted smile twitch on her face as she glanced across the room everywhere, then to Eren and then anywhere except him.

She gulped a little for some reason and was struggling to hold back from saying something in response to the whispers shared between the girls.

Sasha finely finished and disengaged the Queen who looked redder in the face than moments before and Eren was biting back his turn as Jean and Connie returned not too bothered.

Turning to her, and sliding across the table's edge a little to the still motionless Queen who looked deep in struggling thought, Eren extended a hand to touch her arm.

He had meant to lightly tap her forearm and get her attention and whisper to her what Sasha said. The moment his hand connected, Historia's body jumped in surprise at his face so close to her. And the tea still in her hand slipped, falling straight to the floor as it narrowly avoided her feet. It shook from the impact when it hit the carpet which saved it from shattering into pieces, however a thin trail or crack appeared at it's thinnest points and in an instant, the handle broke off from the cup.

It was almost silent, only a faint clink that broke a world in a single instant.

In that instant, Eren saw how Historia's face contorted with a hundred expressions of fear.
The expensive carpet was stained instantly and the detailed carved cup's handle had fallen off.

It had been broken and unusable and the carpet would need to be cleaned.

It wasn't something awfully expensive to fix.

Yet blonde hair passed Eren's vision and fell to floor desperately.

He immediately pushed off his chair and was about lean down to catch her.

Worry flashed through him as he thought Historia had fallen off from her chair.

"... Eh...?" His eyes blinked at his empty arms which would easily have caught her if she was falling.

Reality caught up with him as he saw Historia on the ground, kneeling down and distraught.

She then grabbed out a handful of the pretty dress she often wore around him and began desperately scrubbing at the stain which was spreading and darkening the bright red carpet into a dark brown.

"Wh- His-" Eren coughed out, uncertain as to what was happening and why she looked so young and afraid, like a child from poor upbringing fearing punishment or beatings...

"I'm s-sorry! I'll clean it up right now!" Her voice coughed out desperately and Eren watched bewilderedly at what she was doing.

Historia was apologising between trembling coughs and desperately wiping the floor with her own clothes without hesitation.

She realised her actions were only making the carpet darken even worse as she made it spread further.

She gasped in horror as he realised how badly she had wrinkled and dirtied the dress that she wore. Ice cold panic shot through her, numbers running through her head from memory as she even considered how she could possibly pay for them.

Eren managed to move again just as the footsteps of rushing maids and an approaching guard rushed in looking bewildered at what just happened.

"H-Historia, stop," Eren wrapped one arm around her shoulders and one stopped her hands. She froze and look at him confusingly, as though she just realised that he was there right beside her. "The carpet can be washed and the tea and cup can get replaced."

He could feel the pumping blood through her small body calming down and losing it's fear. "... E... Eren...? ... O-Oh... right..."

"M-Milady, please don't do that, your dress will -" the first maid that had rushed up, tried to stop her a little too late.

Historia jumped slightly but Eren's arm supported her as he pulled her back up slowly away as the first maid came and picked up the two pieces of the cub while another suddenly came in with a wet cloth quickly after and lightly tried dabbing the dress the had been wrinkled and stained as a result just now.

The maids looked concerned as their Queen as they laid a blanket over the stain for now and
consoled her to be sure after the soldier returned to his post when he confirmed that Eren had not done anything.

Jean, Connie and Sasha stared worryingly at the Queen, wondering whether they should break the silence or not.

"... It's alright," Eren consoled her again after she sat back up her chair and he sat next to her again. The blonde blinked owlishly and nodded awkwardly, "... you're not back there, right?"

"... Yeah... sorry... I just... sorry..." she nodded slowly, unable to meet anyone else's eye except his, "I... just my memory..."

"Yeah... I know. Mine too," Eren nodded and rubbed her shoulder soothingly as she sat back on the table and one of the maids slowly pushed her back in carefully while picking away everyone else's cups. "... that day, 8 years ago, past spring... is long gone, you're not living with them anymore."

"Yeah... you're right... it's a long time ago now, isn't it..." Historia nodded and took a breath, facing their three other companions as she regained herself and her expression intensified all of a sudden naturally, "apologises for that incident. Lunch should be coming soon..."

"Y-Yeah, um... uh, are you alright? D-Did I do that?" Sasha inquired with a complicated expression.

"No, it wasn't you," the Queen assured seriously, glancing at Eren for a moment, "just... an old memory a moment ago."

For a brief moment, they had touched, even lightly on the forearm.

"Oh, so you do like... get memories and stuff?" Connie asked while Jean leaned back in his chair in silence.

"Yeah... just not any useful ones to the Scouts," Eren spoke instead, "you're not to blame Sasha, that was... me who caused that."

Historia squeezed his hand a little, which held onto consoling her as she let the memory pass.

No memory came this time.

The lunch began awkwardly as the Queen pondered on what she had just been whispered.

---

**Mid Fall of the Year 850 – Wall Rose**

Moving his Titan body carefully as instructed, Eren prepared his mind again for the experiment.

"Alright. Hey Eren! Are you still clear?" The section commander yelled to him. The 15 metre Titan Eren gave her a nod readily. "Alright! Remember, up to your wrists, no more. Then after my signal, go harden your full body!"

The cave was behind him, prepared for later. What came first was combat practise. Now that he had the Titan hardening ability, it was clear how it could be used for battle after facing off against Annie and Reiner.

'Reiner...’ he bit back his snarl as he came back to concentration. He would have to face him in the
upcoming battle. Of that he was certain.

It wasn't over between them.

His strength balanced again as he recalled what Captain Levi had told him. There was no foreseeable way for him to fight the Colossal Titan yet.

This was training to combat the Armoured Titan. What he had to focus on right now… was beating Reiner.

'Right…' Eren closed his eyes and breathed in for a second. Concentrating his mind, then calling for something, and pulling it out into physical existence by willpower.

He had learnt that focusing and imaging the first time he did it to exponentially work things better for him.

The feeling which Historia had put into his hands. Rushing ahead to it…

…

For a brief moment again, he seemed to recall it all.

Charging ahead at his desires, he had given no thought to anything but reaching it.

He had never given thought to the people who tried to follow him, who watched him go and who influenced him until all fairly recently from the day at the cave…

Nor to himself…

Once more, the moment was gone and he forgot his question before deciding an answer to it.

…

His body was already hardened. The crystal like texture covering his hands and stopping just shy of his wrists.

The next stage was maintaining his hardening. To gather it all and make it even thicker.

For some reason, Historia kept flickering and focusing in his mind as it took form.

Pulling the chains away and freeing him… yelling at him and giving him what he needed… supporting him and providing the answer…

'Huh… I can't blame her for being on my mind all the time now…' Eren thought as he finalised his hardening from picturing Historia.

She had become so special to him so quickly.

Even if it was something only they could understand why.

"Alright Eren, clear! Show me your hands!" Hanji yelled to him as he held up both of his fists and swung them gently, through the air, showing the completely crystal. "Yauush! Great job!"

His section commander entered another eccentric phase that he sighed at while staring at his hands through the Titan oculus system.
"Alright, you've practised the physical training right? We'll have Levi and Mikasa try the new thunder spears with you if you're ready?" Eren nodded in reply. The throws, hits and locks all familiar in his physical body, though he couldn't say he had mastered them.

With his human body, he could perform just as well as ever. But it wasn't just a matter of transferring his movements mentally into his Titan form.

Body composition, strength, weight, reaction speed, balance and experience was different here. However, the same techniques still applied, but he needed to adjust them to the physical body of his Titan.

Though it resembled him somewhat, he couldn't use the body in exactly the same way. And the adjustments needed where somewhat of a tough habit to break.

Not that such concerns stopped him anymore.

---

Mid Fall of the Year 850 – Royal Palace

Heavy black mud. If she had to describe it one way, then it would simply be heavy black mud.

Her quill, made up of a fine and well trimmed feather, after it had no doubt been plucked out from the corpse of a slaughtered or torn to shreds wing, was truly not suitable to the phrase 'light as a feather'.

Of course though, that phrase was only said when comparing something else of equally light weight.

If she said that 'this piece of paper is as light as a feather', and she honestly judged them to be of equal weight, wouldn't that only be relative to herself?

Shuffling at the silly thought produced from her half-awake mind, Historia returned back to dipping her quill in some ink once more.

Only she couldn't lift it.

Both the quill and the ink carried a suddenly unfathomable weight.

It seemed to slow down her movements like tar.

It was as if… Every imprinted black dot of the black substance…

Historia continued dragging the quill across the page, carefully trying her best to clearly draw the letters.

… Was connected by something invisible…

…

'I need a distraction…' Historia decided, looking out across the room and to the window and the sky.

The messengers and servants would come every hour, to add another varying length of new files that are stored over time in three separate rooms depending on heir nature.

She would see and nod in greeting to the three same faces that would come in almost one after the
other at the exact same intervals, looking very tired and sweating slightly between having to move around swiftly and keep their attire in order.

But besides that and her secretary who would check up on her, but was too busy on certain days like these, the Queen was left to her own devices.

In other words, daydreaming time considering she would still have to stay in the room until the end of the period.

She would end up having to do more work later but decided she wasn't going to get anything done properly right now.

He would be arriving soon after all.

Every other day, excluding times when one of them were forcibly preoccupied, he would always come.

She cherished his company a lot.

More than anything else, she wished she could spend more time with him every day.

Of course, she had not given up on the orphanage in the slightest, however she was informed that the arrangements needed to wait a bit more longer until a full month has past before they start instituting such changes with the nobles taxes.

She was going to fix it for those like her in the past.

The people who she could understand.

Like Eren.

She was still struggling when it came to thinking of others. Sometimes, when listening on to the council's topics, she didn't have any interest.

Historia knew she really didn't care about certain things and people. She was never going to be a good girl or even a proper Queen, but she still felt right with doing all she could do help those she understood.

Like Eren.

She breathed in and out silently.

He kept getting fixated in her head constantly, whenever she was.

Sometimes it was at random occasions when walking down the hallway that she suddenly felt the urge to want to summon him to her that instant.

By all means, she could but she didn't want to do anything to inconvenience him either.

Instead of spending time, dragging each other around and simply making up some time back together, they were meant to be uncovering the memories of the Founding Titan.

The knowledge that her sister gained which made her act so different all the time.

Instead of anything of use to the military and the truth which she too felt wasn't right to withhold, she had gained more personal content instead in regards to her friend.
Eren's childhood memories seemingly overlapping her own.

Historia had to stop and consider it all.

To actually have the memories of somebody else.

Had it happened that day at the cave without her notice?

'*Or was it perhaps after…'*

…

It was different.

Surely it was different from the time in the cave.

Her memories that had been sealed by her sister had been returned.

She could remember fully all those times when Frieda had climbed over the fence and reached out to her where nobody else had.

At that point, Historia was certain that was all that happened.

Then during the battle, she had sliced her blades through the nape of her father's Titan form.

As if briefly touching upon the vapours, she suddenly saw her father's memories.

There was no longer any doubt about that.

What had happened after?

Waking her eyes to see Eren's clenched teeth preoccupied expression, holding in the pain from when he hit the stone wall with his legs and making sure that she was completely unharmed.

Perhaps then… or sometime after…

They had been meeting for 3 weeks now.

There were occasional sparks and light that passed in both their minds but nothing so far that rivalled the overwhelming surge from that day in the cave.

And… the one time before…

She concluded it wasn't that far back, as she reached out to the temporary dead body that was Eren.

Historia raked her head, searching for it.

What she saw the first time they properly touched that day after they sat together at the table by the window in a small house with just the two of them.

She couldn't remember it.

The image she and seen from the first time was already buried.

…

Except for… maybe…
A chair.
And a women sitting in it on a porch…
Looking out to… something… beyond the horizon…
Well, in any event, she knew it wasn't that time when this odd phenomenon occurred.
Eren's memories that she could somehow see.
It was only a part, but a considerable amount all the same.
Up until that day, when the wall was destroyed.
Historia had not been able to see much beyond that, besides the death of his mother as he was carried away.
She could see the few years of his life backwards from there.
Eren sleeping beneath a tree.
The time when he saved Mikasa.
Days that he spent with both Armin and Mikasa later on as well.
The hours he shared with his mother.
The somewhat fewer hours that he had with his father.
The day he first met Armin.
Years that Eren just spent looking up at the sky when he was young.
And…
… The earliest memory that she had of him.

9 Years Ago…

Against just 3 opponents, Eren had been certain that he would win easily.

He could take them all at once and beat them, then he can slowly move up and manage to fight half a dozen off someday if anyone ever troubled him.

Then one day he could fight off 100 on his own, maybe 10 years from now. Then a 1000 by the time he was in his early twenties.

He was sure that at his rate, he could fight off 10s of 1000s at his peak.

It was his first fight.

Eren hit the ground after being hit for the first time.

"Hey, let's teach this loser a lesson!" the leader of the three ordered, pumping his fist into his palm just as the other two did the same and grinned down at him as though he was going to be made their punching bag.
Eren tried to roar back at them but his voice failed, coughing out haggard breaths as he quickly rolled back up and charged with a tackle immediately at their leader who had started it all.

He was slow to respond, surprised at how fast he moved and was driven back into the wall of a house, back slammed again the brick wall and he knocked his head backwards.

Eren breathed out, bringing his leg up and kicking the considerably taller boy's knees. He coughed some spit and slumped down a little, as he saw Eren raise a fist again.

His fist ended up colliding with the wall of the building, having let the force of his punch throw him right inwards just as the bully had dodged barely by sliding down onto the ground.

He was then pulled back, the other two now having grabbed him by the shoulder and threw him to the ground together.

The concussion rang in his skull and he struggled opening his eyes and moving his body as the two approached him once more.

The chubby one stepped forward and brought a kick into his ribs that made Eren spurt up after being kicked aside and shaken from the impact.

The other boy with a slightly wealthier feel to him raised his foot now in turn to kick Eren back towards his friend.

The brunet managed to grab his foot this time that came slower with his arms and pulled. A curse was spat at him, demanding him to let go as the boy lost his balance and slumped down on the floor beside him.

Eren managed to gather enough strength to jump and start pommelling his chest while pressing his body down with his leg down on the bully's waist.

The brunet boy's attacks are fast and powerful, and are executed with all the strength in his arm. There was no elegance nor strategy in his swings.

A mere, thoughtless brawl, aiming with the hope of forcing his enemy to stay down.

But the youngest boy is hit in the side by another's punch. His ribs shake from receiving the hit and pain sears through his left lung as he is pushed aside.

He gasps, unable to catch the proper air but continues fighting the new attacker, twisting his body around, he feels pain shoot up his ankle.

The chubbier bully helps his friends up as their leader approaches with his ugly, scowling face biting back force as he throws his fist downwards.

Eren avoids the wide swing which misses him and crawls sideward while kicking desperately. His legs had lost their strength and were slow to his response with little strength left.

Before long, after crawling his best aside, all three of the bullies grouped up and cut off his sides from retreating and kept kicking and punching him as best as they could.

Many of them missed, they were not used to fighting either and were hurting for the first time as they would often simply threaten the other kids and corner them instead.

The bully spat down, his check hurting after one of his friends accidentally elbowed him before he
had enough and picked up the younger brunet boy up by his chest.

He was heavier than expected for some reason but he at least appeared unable to move after being beaten.

Eren's eyes managed to slide open again and the leader of the three bullies received a punch in the jaw with all his strength.

He was thrown back and both of them feel again as the elder boy cursed and spat out a tooth. He glared with all his hatred and squealed at his buddies to finish Eren off.

There couldn't be much power left in the young boy.

Eren was slumped down and breathing heavily, his whole body shooting pain around.

…

Why was he fighting?

The result was already decided.

The fight had been decided from the start.

There is no way for someone like him to win.

He was physically younger and less experienced by several years to match against three others who at least seemed to have brawled a couple times before.

He was at his limits.

Knowing he cannot win, knowing this rough scuffle has no point whatever the result, yet he rolled over on his side painfully and slowly got to his feet again, glaring at the three boys with hatred.

The two sidekicks moved in but Eren three a hit first again.

An inelegant and desperate attack.

It missed and Eren took yet another hit square in the jaw and collapsed down again.

And got back up again.

He kept challenging his three enemies, subconsciously knowing he won't win, and that there's no point in fighting in such a brawl.

Eren threw yet another punch.

Possessed by where he was advancing forward to.

‘His rage is gone now...’ Historia concluded. She may have never been close to him as Krista but she had easily seen several times and heard of it.

The flame that had been burning within him and keeping Eren going for many years had been extinguished.

There was still certainly hatred left within.
But it was a completely different fire that was blazing now.

Fuelled by his resolve to do what he has to do.

He was struggling despite how much more calmer and insightful he become since back then.

But his body kept moving.

...

Still… what was it that made him throw that next punch?

His anger had driven him, given him the strength in his blows.

But… the will and reason to rise again, take the next step, and attack once more.

Where was that coming from?

Historia pondered on it all through the vague childhood memories of Eren.

In some ways, she mused all his changes and perpetuous sides.

She was struggling to put it into words when there was a double knock on her wooden doors.

"AH –!" The noise made her flinch.

She blinked and looked at her hand once more. There was a dip pen in her hand instead, no quill at all in sight.

Historia had never used a quill like that in her life.

"Yes, who is it?" she called evenly enough for her voice to carry without revealing her earlier disturbed thoughts.

"Your Majesty, Eren Jaeger has arrived at the gates," the Queen recognised the voice of her aide through the door and set her work down immediately.

"Please inform him that I will be with him shortly," she slipped out of her chair, stretched a little and got up with a smile on her face.

Grabbing her things and swiftly heading to the other room, she grabbed and put on the clothes she was going to wear and ensured herself what Eren needed.

---

**Mid Fall of the year 850 – Capital Mithras City**

One hour later, Historia was walking down the streets of the capital, her arm looped in around Eren's in order to continue their hand holding experiments.

In public.

His girl friend, who was just a friend that was also a girl, was holding happily onto his hand with her small shoulder bumping slightly into him every now and then on their not date, but just a 'quick' outing.

He was being led down the fine, smoothed out road at which multiple shops and displays were
pulled out, large signs and boards plastered with some holding specials sales in honour of the new Queen and rule.

"So this is what you call a 'little walk', His- OW!" Eren got elbowed in his gut lightly and sighed in exasperation as her name just so easily rolled off his tongue.

Her name was quite unusual either way and repeating the Queen's name in public while they were trying to remain disguised was counter-productive.

Still Eren realised just how much he liked saying her name.

"Sorry, did you just mean since you're 'little' and so you need me to 'walk' y- ow!" Another elbow to his ribs at the spot made him stumble on his feet and get pulled back up by their connected hands.

The Queen next to him was hidden with her shoulder scarf being improvised as a hood to hide her face and pretty features while she was dressed in more modest clothes more suitable for the countryside. "Don't think of this weirdly, this is just an outing…"

It worked well for the most part with only a couple scoffs being sent in their direction at their way given their attire, though Eren imagined it may be more the Survey Corp's wings of freedom that stuck out like a sore thumb.

His duty was a soldier at the front lines, while the view of the Survey Corps has strengthened, there would still be plenty of individuals who know of what happened in Stohess district.

At least nobody seemed aware that he was one of those Titan shifters.

"Shopping, huh…" Eren mumbled as he saw some poor guy being pulled around by either a mother or aunt from shop to shop looking exhausted to death.

"Think of it more as reconnaissance," she suggested, pulling him onto one side of the road so they could look through the open shop windows at the displays.

"For finding people to run out of business?" Eren weighed the purse that he elected to carry for her in his hand that held a fair measure of heavy coins.

He might just as well be holding enough to buy out all of a general shop's stores at once.

"If we run into anyone scummy trying to cheat you then it's always an option," she hummed innocently with a devil aura. "Or instead you could spend the money on something nice for yourself."

"Hah, alright then, I'll spend it for your company," Eren smiled at her clasping his fingers between hers and threading them in and out. "How much is that worth?"

"Hm, it's not something for sale I'm afraid, but I can make a special deal just for you," she smiled, her eyes landing on a large shop they were approaching at the corner of the crossroads in the city, "it's a pastry for the afternoon."

Eren turned as he caught the pleasant dough like warmth in the air, the tasty aroma of fresh bread and pastries that even entranced him considerably.

The bakery had double doors on both sides of the corner that Eren and Historia stopped in front off and a steady but smooth sets of customers were entering and exiting from, carrying all sorts of pies
and gateaux.

The shop was large, like the size of some company warehouse on it's own and prospering daily from the multiples of wealthy men and working class who all had a better sense of style.

"Ah, this the one I've heard all about for sure," Historia spoke at last after both took it in for the first time.

"Yeah, wait here and I'll pick you something then," Eren gestured to the many well clothed individuals who would more likely have attended the coronation who would know the Queen's face well. "I'll be back soon."

"Alright then," Historia consented, and watched him open the door, "and remember, don't get me anything too expensive, I need a break from those overly rich cakes, something really plain."

While the food was undeniably delicious to her, she still felt a little difficult knowing that she was being served some of the finest food within the walls that would be only for the upper nobility and unavailable to anyone else.

She didn't need the level of flavour and work put into perfecting a meal worth for a Queen's standing day after day. She was content in enjoying something simpler herself.

"Don't worry, I'll get you something that won't look half your stature," he told her before patting her down as she nodded, and waited outside as per their intentions in not sticking.

She didn't have to wait for long as the service moved quickly and most people seemed to have made an order to pick up themselves, which she made a mental note of.

Eren came out with a baguette in hand. Her eyes opened up wide in wonder at how big it was. And she instantly felt the need to touch it to see if it was really a pastry of some kind.

"W-Wow… it's… massive," as she took it in her hands, she eyed the full length up after receiving Eren's baguette.

"There, this is about 'half your stature'," Eren smirked at her. The baguette was just under about half of Historia's small height when she held it up between both her hands.

It was nicely plain, gently crispy and soothingly warm to her touch.

"Oh so you can make elegant speech," she accented herself as taught to speak in the elegant regal manner.

Touching the head of Eren's baguette, who held onto it for her in case it fell out of her hands, she pulled off the crusty end that let out it's freshly cooked savour and her mouth chomped into the tasty dough that she instantly fell in love with.

Watching her slowly devour and stuff her cheeks with it as they continued walking, Eren began to wonder how big the baguettes could actually get and how complicated they were. So long as he had enough dough and whatever else went in it which he would figure out later, he may be able to bake Historia a baguette of his own design.

This one was about 70 centimetres or so, which he held out once more for Historia to pull off another two pieces off which he accepted one of and started eating himself.

'Maybe I can make mine taller than her…' he continued wondering while enjoying the flavour
himself.

It was simple and plain on the outside but carried a soft range of textures that made him want to eat a bit more himself and they swiftly shared it between themselves.

Looking around onto the street vendors that they passed, Eren audibly gulped at some of the price tags, especially when compared to what he would be use to seeing in Trost or even further back in Shinganshina.

They had more than enough money for them but he realised how he wasn't used to spending that amount of money.

"Hey come on, save that for when we're alone tonight." Some guy suddenly spoke loud enough for them to hear to the woman that he was with, going the opposite direction from the Titan shifter and Queen.

"Shh, I've got something special for you tonight," the woman whispered back to sweetly and kissed his cheek.

Eren blinked as he noticed the young couple pass them down the street, holding hands just like they were still.

He looked around him and saw that there were other couples around the whole street, leaning on each other, flirting and emitting a generally lovey-dovey aura.

The street they wandered into seemed to be filled with them all of a sudden giggling and flirting all around them.

"… Oh," Eren felt a little bit of heat pass through his face as he glanced to Historia, and both of them tried to ignore it without address it further, their linked hands only consoling themselves that their case was completely different.

It really was.

But the thought of letting go of the other's hand didn't pass through once.

"A-Anyway, right here!" Historia pulled him over and through the door after finishing her part of the pastry.

The Titan shifter got pushed into a medium sized clothing and tailor shop that

The bell rang at the door as they entered and a person at the counter welcomed them as she finished up writing in her sales books.

Garments and articles of clothing were hanged neatly down the sides on clear display.

Suits, coats, vests, trousers, and a line of hats.

There were fine clothes of silk and linen but more were of wool and leather.

Also the female underwear section that Eren acted indifferently too.

Historia immediately started chatting up too the attendants who came to them who nodded and pointed her down the way while Eren continued looking through dresses he saw.

He noticed one of the dresses which he could have sworn Historia had one of. 'Did she get them
from here…?’ He imagined she didn’t come personally but one of the maids must have gone somewhere to get her dresses as she never owned any before.

A thought went through his head, wondering why she seemed to try and point out her attire to him when he visited her.

A moment later, Historia came rushing to him, and he could break from how adorable she suddenly holding up a jacket much bigger than herself.

The black longcoat in front of him fluttered a little after hitting her knees.

"This one!" The blonde held it out happily for him to take.

He squinted an eyebrow in turn but went ahead and took it off her hands while feeling the comfortable weight in his hands.

"Give me your other jacket," she then said and pointed to the one he was wearing now. She held it up for him while he slipped out of his military great jacket and exchanged the cloaks.

He handed the wings of freedom to her and took the dark brown longcoat instead that she chose.

While throwing his arms up and wringing out the coat through the ear with a thin swishing sound, he pulled one arm through the sleeve and let the other side glide into his other arms reach before he threw it down onto himself.

"Awww, it looks great on you!" Historia exclaimed at once, the folded military coat hitting the floor accidentally while looking so pleased in her eyes.

"Really?" Eren questioned, wondering if this was some fashion, not that he had ever paid attention to such talk.

It felt good on him and it also wasn't flashy at all, rather just his type of clothing, somewhat more suitable alongside the more country dress Historia wore.

"Hide your grin a little if you want to pretend you don't like it," Historia smirked at him and he realised that he was smiling happily.

"Yeah, but, just the mon-" he started. It was something at least that he was fine with and wouldn't stop Historia from buying. But it was still Historia's money.

"Enough about cost," grumpily waving him off, she turned with a gentle wish of her hair to the counter and began talking and pointing.

The attendant nodded and began pulling through a catalog’s pages to confirm something before Historia came and took the purse of him again.

He smiled a little, somehow the darker shades soothing him a lot more than the wings of freedom that he had been chasing after for so long.

It had a nice light leather feel to it and almost looked like it hadn't been manufactured completely as planned.

When they stepped out again, Eren noticed how despite being autumn, the sunlight felt warmer on him as it shone and was reflected by the many windows and soaked in through the darker 'bad boy' clothes that he wore.
He chuckled when Historia called him that, as though it meant some sort of actual style name.

And he realised how it was the first gift he had been given in several years.

After they left, they quickly stopped by at a cafe which they had their lunch in, now Eren not having to attract attention from his soldiery emblem that was wrapped up and neatly folded into one of the bags they carried.

They tried snacking on all sorts of things they had never seen before in the small kiosks, sweet shops and street stalls.

Sugary delicacies and sweet sauces, kebab sticks filled with small amounts fried meats and vegetables, saccharine fruit juices and some ghastly creations of spice that made them both gasp for breath when they were offered samples.

Historia also showed him around the public library that was just across from the palace and into the many book and antique shops at the odd objects, artefacts and projects that people were doing.

There had been a growth in investments to scientific researches and astronomy insight that were open to selling and sharing information and discoveries to varying degrees.

Picking up all sorts of interesting inventions which Eren and Historia experienced for the first time turned the hours on the clock one by one.

"I read the report," Historia mentioned at one point, as they came out of the bookstore, or rather got kicked out of one for simply reading the books in store.

"Huh? What report," Eren pointed and began leading Historia to another stall that had some curious new creation which Eren chose for her this time.

They both licked up the "ice cream" and got a few goosebumps from the pleasant cold feeling they got.

"You managed to seal the a hole with your hardening power," she elaborated, walking down the streets while moving to the next shop. "… But then you began bleeding out and fainted."

"Oh that one… yeah," Eren finished eating up the frozen ice, ensuring himself that he ought to try something this simple in winter though he realised that some form of refrigeration would be ideal to store up for the summer. "I… can't tell you to not worry about it but, I heal back up and get time off with you, so it's fine."

"Yeah… there's just some people doubting you too," Historia cast her eyes down and finished her own ice cream, her stomach full and not in need of dinner tonight, "but I will… nevermind, don't worry about them either.

"… Thanks," he answered in reply, feeling the Queen's support in internal matters on his behalf. 'I'll repay you someday…' he decided while switching the several bags between his arms and touching her hand again.

She held in again, no concern about who saw as the work hours were finished and people were heading home as shops began to slowly close down and the couples diminished.

Eren blinked as he passed a still open shop and stopped, seeing something in the window.

"… Hey, I'll be back…" he told her after a while, considering whether he should bring her in with
him or not.

"Alright, I'll wait here," Historia acknowledged his gratitude in return as he went to buy something alone so she didn't see, "and don't worry about the cost!"

He rolled his eyes at the umpteenth reminder and he entered the door, having no intention to buy something too expensive as usual.

---

**Late Fall of the Year 850 – Outside the Orphanage**

"H-Hey, where are we going now?" Historia asked as Eren still held her hand and was pulling her along. Looking again, she realised that was wrong. She was the one holding his hand tightly.

As if wanting him to take her wherever he wanted to go, she had clasped her hand into his, not long after he had taken off with her just as Mikasa took the sacks of flour and food off from Eren, who had just taken it off from her.

Watching things fall into slow motion, the moment Mikasa turned, Eren had glanced at her, pressed a finger to his lips to tell her to keep quiet, and grabbed her arm before taking her in silent steps.

Had Mikasa seen them? There was intensity that Historia could feel from her, and it was obvious to read. Back as Krista, it was obvious amongst all the girls in the dormitory of what Mikasa's feelings were for a certain brunet.

Her heart was racing, despite neither of them running fast at all. They had simply ducked around the closest sheds that Eren had led her behind. There was no need for any conscious breathing after such a little run for them.

It was that part of her again. The part of her that felt truly alien, and unbelonging within her. Her heart was beating up to her throat, down to her stomach in resonance to that part of her that felt strange.

"Just over here..." Eren said vaguely, walking side by side with her after he nodded that Mikasa wasn't following right now.

"That was... kinda mean for Mikasa you know..." Historia pointed out, frowning a little at herself as two opposing forces beat in resistance at each other. One of them, feeling somewhat unhappy at bringing her up, the other which she listened to, feeling sorry for how she might have looked with Eren earlier.

"... I... yeah, a little," He simply replied, a little bitterly, like at someone over him telling him what to do because they knew better, "trust me, afterwards she won't mind... No, I'll apologise to her later."

They were already at the fence to the back road around the orphanage. Crossing over it easily, she kept holding his hand while he helped her over it mockingly, as though he expected her to be either afraid of crossing or as if she would fall over such a little thing.

She stepped and ducked easily under the gap between the top and bottom wooden lines of the fence edge, just after Eren.

Into the land she was always told not to go. A land which she now effectively ruled.

"Seriously," the Queen of the lands called his name, "where are we going? It will be dusk soon and
"you're not supposed to go too far from the rest of your squad."

"But I've got you to protect me," Eren watched her roll her eyes before pointing to just around the corner, "we won't be seen there for a little while, and... we'll only see each other a couple more times before I have to go."

Historia blinked, noticing a small partially destroyed wooden roof. It looked like a little shelter that the chickens would lay their eggs under or baby lambs would be nurtured by their mothers while it rained on the enclosure they were now exploring for the first time.

The road was empty, save for the two of them. The back roads would normally just be used by the farmers and workers moving the horses, wagons and yields while things were transported in from the main road.

The farmhouses had been converted into the orphanage, no longer having any use for several years, and nobody would likely be coming across the bend in the road which Eren crouched down and sat his legs out on, just as she followed beside him.

With the small enclosure behind them, hiding their backs, they looked on at the slowly setting sun to one side, over which rolling clouds steadily passed.

"Ah..." Historia let out slightly as she accidentally bumped her arm into Eren, which shot electric sparks through her, coming to terms with what that persisting feeling was.

The part of her which was causing this. She had known him only for such a short period of time... yet she had practically known him for her entire life after becoming the Historia freed from Krista.

Historia breathed out silently, watching his from the side. He was watching her in the same way, but pretended not to, only staring at the sun contently with her.

Their hands were still linked together, finger to finger, pressed in between.

"Hey, anyway, here," Eren began to fish a hand into a pocket of his longcoat and pulled something out. "I... wanted to give you this."

He then pulled out another from the same pocket.

The blue eyes blinked to avoid the light reflected into them for a moment.

"A gemstone?" The ocean eyes opened in wonder.

"A-Ah well... it's a kind of crystal... I think."

For some reason, he imagined, the kind of gesture of giving a lady a gem would suggest.

He shifted his body towards Historia a little closer.

The crystals that he held in either one of his hands were transparent.

The light silver like gleam of the edges were almost like diamonds.

Historia had only seen such a prized material once before in passing.

The colour of these crystals were much more ordinary.

She picked up one of them and felt how polished and smoothed out it was.
It was somewhat larger than her hand.

But it fitted just about perfectly in his.

The shape was semi-cylindrical but slanted at the short sides.

Four long sides and two short ones.

There was a string attached to the end, big enough to put it around her neck.

It was held in a small casket with two string loops loose.

Clearly meant to be flipped around either way at the longer end of the crystal to secure it in place.

Pulling it out of the casket easily, she held the whole crystal.

The little casket looked handmade.

Had Eren spent time working with all the tiny leather strap pieces?

The smooth spring was also certainly bought.

She smirked at how the tie and knot was a mess to ensure it didn't fall off.

Holding either side of it, the blood beating through her pulse, she could see the ground below her through it.

It was scratched and dulled in some places but still remained clear.

Looking closer, she tried to recall the names of all the crystals she could remember.

Only few came to her head and none that she was confident about.

"It's... a way to find the sun... even in the cloud filled skies..."

The green-eyed soldier repeated the words.

"Eh?" The words made her insides flutter.

'... A way to find something...'

The meaning connected to her.

"So it's... a bit like a compass for the sun?" she wondered examining it from all sides.

A sundial if she recalled.

She frowned.

There was no needed nor water nor anything that seemed functioning.

She only noticed one mark in a circle at one of the ends.

Beyond that, it seemed completely ordinary on the surface.

How could such a thing tell the position of the sun?
What special power could a rock have?

"Sort of…" Eren's shoulder touched herself comfortably. "I'll show you."

Following his lead, she mimicked the way to hold the transparent crystal.

"My father taught me how to use one…"

Eren remembered it well.

The day not long after his first fight.

Instead of bothering to try and engage with the other kids, Eren had retreated to his usual spot alone.

Nobody could bother him that way.

And so he spent the day staring up at the sky.

His father had come back one day again and shown him it for his amusement.

"It's really simple, a kid can use it," the brunet mused back in time.

' "Until you find a friend for yourself."

That had been the condition for it.

He wondered what had happened to it.

It would likely have been left back in their home in Shinganshina.

The drawer next to his bed.

Had it been destroyed the day the crystal been crushed the house and his mother?

"Apparently it was used long ago…"

Eren wondered how his father knew of such a thing.

"It allowed people to navigate the… ocean…"

His memories passed to it.

A blue surface of water that covered 70% of the earth's surface.

It's use was now lost.

He himself had never seen the sea himself.

The stone crystal's purpose was ornamental.

A gemstone of wishes.

"You hold it up and you look through the long side to the other end," he held it up.

There was a dot embedded in one of the smaller rhombus flat sides of the rhombus made of charcoal.
The blonde eagerly copied him, her blue eye looking through the crystal where she could see a dot in the sky from the other end now.

"You sorta use it like a telescope," he explained it to her. "Move it horizontally about at the angle of how high the sun should be.

He cupped his hand over the long side to demonstrate and she followed suit again.

The black dot could be seen through the long side.

Moving it across the horizon, they could both see two dots being season.

The second one was purple.

It appeared at the place just under the sun.

Experimenting from it in his childhood, Eren remembered how it could become a number of colours.

It depended on the time of day and season.

But the second was always a bright colour.

They both had two eyes, of green and blue, by nature that acted in a similar way when looking just through one.

They moved together, watching the two dots come closer to becoming one, the closer they got towards the sun's location.

The sky however was clear for now.

The sun shown brightly for them to see it clearly. There was no need to even find it when they could see it themselves.

"Well… it's just a pendent really," Eren scratched his head awkwardly.

It's value lost in such circumstances.

"No it's not. It's more than that. Thank you," she squeezed his hand gently while smiling and putting the string over her neck. "I love it."

Eren nodded, lost in her smile.

Her smile told him that she understood perfectly.

What the crystal symbolised for them both…

He wondered if a second sun had come into existence since he knew nothing else that bright.

The celestial sphere of light continued soaking it's warm rays into their clothes.

Their way was clear for now.

Slipping it back into the respective caskets with a bit of a push, they looped the strings around the opposite end into each other.

They let the crystal rest a bit over a chest as they kept holding hands a little longer.
With the sun moving in the sky slowly, time felt both fleeting and unfading.

The two identical sunstone amulets hanging at both their chest gave off a soft din beneath the sun and sky.

Welp anyways... I've taken some time to revise what I intend to do for this fic and mainly I guess... I've decided to cut down on some things I've really said that I would do I'm afraid, so... sorry if that includes parts anyone might have wanted but I'm afraid... I'm nowhere near good enough to write all the things I've said I would do lol, so... yeah... I'm going to try and actually start with managing to write what I even want to convey properly to begin with haha.

Just to clear up something up, sorry if it was made unclear since I got asked about it: Canonically, Historia does not see Eren's memories, only her past memories that Frieda had blocked and likewise, Eren does not see Historia's memories, only some of his father's from this point in time at the anime/manga. Here, for the sake of the (very slow) direction in which I hope to take this fanfic, the abilities of the Coordinate will be different from canon.

Also! Perhaps another error on my part? I guess it's my misreading but yeah Historia was apparently born in the north part of Wall Sina and that was where her birthplace was, yet the Reiss chapel which is also apparently on Reiss's territory and apparently near the Reiss estate is in the north-east part of Wall Rose since where Rod transformed into a Titan. But yeah, error on my part since I just got it in my head that was where Historia was born and... yeah... is annoying to change despite how should be pretty simple but for the mini-plot that failed sorta but hopefully am able to round of next chapter but basically, for the purposes of this fic:

Rod Reiss owns territories both in northern Wall Sina and north-eastern Wall Rose (like is seemingly implied in canon despite it being unspecified). Unlike canon however, Historia was born in north-eastern Wall Rose.

Sorry if this caused any confusion, and it messes up the other fic now as well lol, so annoyed that it was only after I published it that someone pointed it out to me but yeah, my fault for misreading it, and arguably perhaps an issue in manga translation but yeah...

The sky was filled with grey clouds, the sun nowhere to be seen.

Pulling upon the cord around his neck, the crystal attached on the end like a pendent still shone in the faint sun.

The overcast sky was ideal for it as he cupped the cylinder and searched for along the horizon until two dots appeared again.

Dark and bright.

He kept moving it across the horizon where the two dots of refracted light became one.

Until he found the position of the sun again.
Abschied

Chapter Notes

Welp, so it goes on! This chapter is mainly filling in the gaps of overextended scenes lol, dunno if anyone remembers the training camp idea which went completely off-course from what I intended for it lol, but eh I want to at least tie up loose ends even if there isn't anything to it lol. But yeah, nothing that really helps EreHisu but I wanna at least brush down the EreKuri stuff, since yeah the idea of it was to show Eren/Krista not working before the whole thing went everywhere lol but yeah just skip through if you don't remember it, it's not important content, only annoyingly unfinished to me haha.

Ahh though latest chapter yesss, hope the time of revealing Eren's POV or at least a part of it comes soon haha but ahh this chapter changed things for the far better for me haha.

Discord invite link: https://discord.gg/BnGuCwU

"speech"

'thoughts' - Italics

Chapter 11 - Abschied

, ~2001

? "Wait! What are you doing?!)" The girl suddenly looked up from her usual old book as she looked up again after turning the papyrus page over. "Hm?" The boy looked down from the tree, his legs wrapped around a 3rd level branch from the ground "I wanna try that, so I'm climbing up to get it."

His finger pointed to the fruit hanging from a branch on the tree. "I-I can see that! Why?" The girl inquired up at him concernedly as he looked down on her upside down, his somewhat lengthy hair standing on end. "Who not?" The boy argued, "is there a rule that says I can't?"

The girl bit her lip and straitened her headband when the boy almost fell. "... Fine, if you hurt yourself then it's your fault."

"Well duh!"The boy rolled his eyes, leaning his body forward, "g- AH!"
And fell.

It wasn't a particularly big tree and he was only a couple meters of the ground and didn't break anything though the impact still hurt.

"Hey!" the girl rushed over to him and held her arms uncertainly without touching him as he slowly rolled up and showed her that he was fine, "see! Told you!"

"W-Whatever!" The boy huffed and stood up carefully, feeling the ache in his rear and back that he tried to soothe away, "J-Just… let's just keep reading!"

He walked around in a circle for a little as the girl watched before he sat down below the tree, stealing the girl's usual spot on this side of it. The girl huffed and sat down cross-legged next to him, but opened the book up for both of them.

She laid the cover over both of their legs, sharing the storybook as they both leaned over next to each to read.

"Sorry… I should have gotten a stick or something…" the boy said unexpectedly, though he struggled to say that she had been right.

The girl blinked as she tried to hide her content smile as her hands moved over the roughly marked book, tracing the hand over the picture. "… It's alright."

Her hand trailed across the ground as she read aloud to her friend.

It hit something soft as she glanced down and brought it to her face.

The apple that had fallen from the tree.

Late Fall of the Year 850 – Royal Palace

The clear skies made her eyes blink for some reason, and recall where she was each time.

Her memories had felt a little blurred recently.

For some reason she would keep waking up to that scene.

Wiping her drool away in the morning, she remembered how she was wrapped up in the corner of a massive bed.

She wasn't laying on the old wooden table, resting her head in her arms as she woke up by the window.

And Eren wasn't laying just a little across from her on the bed in their temporarily shared room.

Yet her mind kept glancing back to that time.

How things had changed in so little.

It was midday now, not the slowly approaching dusk.

She wondered why it felt so backwards in some strange way.

He had left, suggesting for her to come with, and lie around watching the sunset like she saw him
in his childhood memories before he had to head home.

She had followed him out from the door and saw him lying there and doing almost nothing.

And then he had shown her the stone.

Historia shook her head, trying to separate the two memories apart when they occurred little over 2 months apart.

"Your Majesty," the voice of the young handmaiden prompted her away from her thoughts.

The Queen stood up, staring out through the window of her bedroom, holding out the crystal in her hands. Her hands traced over the stone before tucking it away beneath her new dress that she was trying on right now.

Historia felt the young lady, Eloise if she recalled her name correctly, brush off and check all over her dress and making sure that it was perfectly tailored after she took her measurements a week ago.

The specifically appointed hand appeared at most 5 years older than her though she didn't talk much when carefully adjusting her clothing nor when she would bring her meals in the evening.

Her aide Adrianna waved her hand down and nodded satisfactory, "is it all comfortable your Majesty?"

"Yes, I have no complaints," Historia inclined her head slightly, finding no issues in the attire.

Her royal dress and cape were all done and suited to her size.

It wasn't exactly her style of clothing but she certainly didn't like it.

"I shall do your hair now your Majesty," her handmaiden smiled and Historia nodded her head before standing up straight as the maid got to work in her smooth locks, upon which the golden crown would soon rest.

That was the part which bothered her mainly.

Whenever the crown was placed on her head, Historia felt slightly more aware of the weight all over her.

"Your guests should have arrived now your Majesty," her aide informed her after the time, "shall I bring them to meet with you or would you rather delay for a little?"

"I will have Mr Yeager see me now." She spoke definitely, forcing away the smile and sudden good mood resurfacing again as her aide nodded and left.

The room went silent as her handmaiden Eloise carefully brushed and tied her hair at the back, forming a crown like shape with the braids themselves.

"Thank you for your help Eloise," Historia mentioned, putting away her sigh from the redundant reply to her ears.

"E-Eh, it's really nothing at all my lady, y-you don't need to say anything," she stammered a little, the Queen's silk like hair slipping out of her hand as she moved to redo the braid. "A-Ah… um… my name is Emilia though…"
"Ah, I'm sorry!" Historia flinched and winced when her hair felt apart again and the handmaiden Emilia rushed to restart again. "… Sorry…"

The previous lords would wave them off without a word, though each time their new young Queen was tended to, they received compliments, words of gratitude or apologies that she was meant to ignore in training. Each time though, her voice gave out and she couldn't help but feel it would be too rude to not answer her.

"N-No, it's nothing my lady, ah um…” the handmaiden slowly smoothed out the precious locks of her personal mistress and carefully arranged the braids. "Ah um... Eloise is my twin sister who brings you supper your Majesty, there's no way to tell as apart."

Historia let out a small noise, and bit her lip slightly frowning, not being aware of it at all. Treading her hands through her golden locks, Emilia smiled gently at the younger lady, having heard not long ago of how the little girl had spent time as a soldier until recently, though she didn't know much besides that and what went around in rumour.

No matter what her background and how she ended up here at such a young age, she and her sister had felt honoured to be assigned to tending to her.

All the servants truly felt the same. Though much had remained the same from the switch to the military from the old nobles, the demands and expectations hadn't changed.

The one positive for certain, was their new ruler that all the half a dozen servants who tended to her personally spoke well of.

"Alright, it's all done your Majesty." Emilia smiled at the truly beautiful girl and took a step back before bowing slightly as Historia stood up and turned to the crown which was laid on the cushion next to her.

The handmaiden moved over swiftly and reassured the Queen that she would assist her, and met with the troublesomely sweet pout the Queen seemed to do that she struggled to react to.

Holding back yet another sigh, Historia stood up and felt the girl next to her place down the crown carefully on top of her hair, moving around to check that it rested properly in her hair.

Just at that moment, there was a double knock on the other side of the doors that the Queen answered. "Enter."

Her aide opened the door and two people came in.

The first was as always Eren.

Looking a little more nervous than usual, she moved a little and a lock of her hair slipped out of her bun.

The second person with him was Mikasa.

2 Days Ago – Wall Sina Orphanage

A roll of clouds flowed through as dusk came on, covering the golden sunlight which she had seen glistening through Eren's warm hair an hour ago now.

"And then you -" The brunet moved next to her, recalling how it was done again.
The pair of cuboid crystals.

The conditions were overcast just as required.

Cupping her hand over the long side, she followed his instruction.

"Align the imprints on either side together," she rolled her eyes while they stood next to each other and were using their own.

They were standing up against the fence to the orphanage after returning for the day.

"Yeah, can you see it?" Eren asked as he closed one eye and looked through the opposite side from where the dot was, which faced towards the sky.

Historia smiled softly before mimicking him and leaning on the fence, both of them putting their weight on the wooden barrier which creaked forward a little, getting bent of the ground in the process.

Aiming the sunstone's line of direction slightly below from where it was, she saw the two dots on the other side.

One was the drawn on one from charcoal, the darker shape. It was the real dot.

The other was slightly lighter. That was the imaginary dot.

The name through her off a little, when she could see it for herself that it existed, she didn't know why it was called such a name and Eren hadn't either.

"It's wobbling and is a little off from where it should be," Historia replied.

Looking through it, she could see the brightest parts of the clouds, behind which the sun surely was.

The dots were about equal of intensity and direction there.

Moving it slightly to the right, away from the centre of the sun, the second dot disappeared from sight, becoming one dot that she could see.

"Hold on, let me help," Eren suggested, moving himself down as Historia brushed the clear crystal, making sure there was no dust on the transparent sunstone.

Historia nodded in gratitude and felt Eren stepping up behind her.

In took an instance to realize that she was pressing her back into his chest, is head on the side of her shoulder clasping either hand over hers.

She felt suddenly pleasant as he bent over a little so that their heads were next to each other and they could both see what they were doing.

"It's maybe because you're small," Eren noted and she brushed his chin a little with her elbow, "your hand I mean."

Moving his own, clearly larger hand to cup around hers and the crystal which was now hidden by twice the layour of skin.

Warm skin. Emitting heat from one to the other and back the same way.
Looking through it, like a telescope she had seen someone building in the library books she had began, she could see the two dots as they pointed it into the sky together.

Eren moved her stone across the horizon, not vertically as she had tried and her best friend had informed her it wasn’t done like that.

Slowly, inching it further towards the centre of the setting sun, where the orange hue was blocked out with overcasting clouds that slowly moved along.

Moving steadily into position just below the sun, the second dot began to move towards the black dot, it’s purple image disappearing.

A movement later and it was gone, the crystal lit up with a gentle strange light.

"There," Eren spoke. The black dot was one in number now, and more intense than before.

Staring through the crystal which deciphered a part of her wishes, she felt the cool breeze in the air blow her tied back hair into his neck a little and his own settling down and brushing her slightly once the wind died down.

"Ahh… so that way…” Historia seemed to recall it from a book somewhere "the land of the setting sun…”

She sighed contently at the memories of Frieda reading it to her.

And then promptly telling her it meant bedtime for her.

Frieda was gone.

Somehow as she leaned backwards, she felt closer now.

As though she was still with her.

The hidden sunset.

Obscured by the clouds, they couldn’t even see it.

They saw the unseen sunset together.

Thoughts of when he was with her colluded.

The little brushes of his hair against her, the strong fingers motioning over hers, the little whispers from his lips that told of old stories and childhood wishes of flying and chasing the clouds over the azure sky.

The feelings she had been pondering over for the past 2 months and a half since they became proper friends and learnt of each other.

2 months since she accepted him as her closest confidant here. Her best friend.

"Hey… Eren…”

She wanted his affection.

That was the only thing, she was sure about.
It was the only thing she was able to decide upon over the past 2 months of giving it serious thought.

She didn’t know what she was asking for beyond that, or even what sort of affection he could give.

A brother’s affection in place of her lost sister’s?

A best friend’s affection in place of the best friend who had left her?

A knight’s affection to the maiden who he had rescued like in her old stories?

Historia didn’t know. Eren was none of those three. And yet he was a little like certain parts from all three.

She didn’t know what it was, unable to draw her way of thought to anything similar that she had ever seen, she didn’t know what sort of affection was making her wanting to stand her ground against Mikasa Ackerman herself.

"Hey..." She spoke at last, ready to gauge an expression she already expected.

"Y-yeah...?" Eren looked like he was just pulled out from his own important thoughts, that she could tell she wasn't unrelated to.

"I... can guess what you will say but... I want to hear you say it anyway," the Queen breathed in, afraid what she was about to ask would cause -

She breathed in and said the dreaded question of hers.

"What do you think about Mikasa?"

For some reason, it felt she had crossed over into the Ackerman's territory, and it was too late to turn back. Playing with the sparks of whatever fire this would lead her into, she had to ask.

"Mikasa...?" Eren blinked, as though realising something, "she's my family... Why do you ask?"

"..." Historia me talking sighed, seeing how he ended up missing the whole point, "no but I mean... She's not your actual sister..."

Eren looked at her and cocked his head, "yeah I guess... but she's like my sister."

"... Eren..." she struggled how to begin for a little. How was she meant to ask something like this clearly. "Mikasa loves you."

The words came out of her.

"... Yeah... I know." The answer came simply with no embarrassment or change of heart. "I'm not that clueless," he said evenly, a thin trail of smile. Eren was staring to her equally, just as level headed as before.

"... O-Ok..." Historia tried to hide her blush, as best as she could from a mix of embarrassment. She confirmed with her own eyes piercing Eren and reading and understanding the thoughts behind his feelings again. "So you've... talked to her about this before...?"

"More or... less..."Eren breathed out slowly and leaned his head back, "Maybe I should have been clearer with her but... I answered her just that..."
"... Oh... so..." Historia had to direct everything in her head to process the simple information. She frowned and began wondering if it was appropriate for her to feel that way.

The part of her, which told her that she didn't like the way in which Mikasa had looked at her and Eren.

But...

That other part of her felt happy. It made her feel happy for some reason.

...

She hated it. She felt that she hated that she was feeling somehow more happy than pitiful for Mikasa, as though the balances should have been the other way round.

...

'I can't...' She thought. Her other part, that seemed to admonish herself, suddenly looked just as ugly as the alien part. '... I'm not a good girl... I'm... I can't feel bad about it...'

It was completely selfish of her to do so, but she couldn't deny it.

She wanted Eren's affection.

She didn't know what kind, but she knew it wasn't like Mikasa did for sure. Looking even once at her, she could tell Mikasa's light held different lights from herself.

Historia did pity her for it a little, but... it was Eren who would decide his own feelings.

Eren was the one who needed to choose to whom he would give the certain type of affection to. She had made her choice on whom already, but she would never be satisfied with what she wanted if Eren wasn't true to his own feelings.

Glancing, she wondered what he felt for her. She could probably find out, if she wanted to. Still holding hands, both rested together on the soft grass, if she focused, she would be able to find out for sure.

But she didn't. Eren's feelings were his own. She wanted him to choose if he ever wanted to.

She didn't even understand what type of thing she even wanted him to do to satisfy her want for his affection.

Historia knew Eren would act on his feelings just as he did now.

He had been the one to take her hand, and lead her to this point.

She had followed, and clasped her hand only after he showed that he wanted to.

Historia concluded that was all she could do right now.

Waiting for Eren to give her a sign once again for her, she waited with only facts about the existence of some sort of feelings for him concluded.

'... I want Eren's affection...'
So did Mikasa.

And...

She had to ask it as well.

This time with actual uncertainty.

Compared to Mikasa, if she had to place someone far closer to his feelings then...

"So... what do you feel about Annie?"

About 40 Hours Later

The target of her unchanged affection entered, followed by the raven haired soldier from the top of their class. The soldier who may be now considered humanity's second strongest.

Historia felt at ease, not afraid of the Ackerman particularly but with no intention to bring up anything to antagonize her either.

Mikasa had indeed saved her once, though they certainly weren't close by any means. Krista had sincerely thanked her on the wall after Utgard castle when her past self had been saved as she would back then, though her old self was in her last moments by then. Thinking back to the cave, Historia realised she hadn't expressed her gratitude for protecting her head after she had been blown away from the titan steam.

"Her Majesty is rehearsing, please give her your greetings and follow me to the waiting room for a little until it is finished," her attendant Adrianna gestured and nodded to her Queen, "please continue as discussed, your Majesty."

Historia nodded as she recalled the suggestion, and proceeded without being flustered as she made eye contact with the Titan shifter and then to Mikasa.

Eren had arrived through the doors of the palace once more, only this time Historia was in a far more regal gown, designed to stick out in public and point everyone to who their ruler clearly was.

Her heavy gold crown was planted firmly in her skilfully tied bun of blonde hair.

Mikasa stepped forward and offered a bow to her, Eren noticing to the side and following a moment after.

"Good morning Mr Jaeger, Miss Ackerman," Historia stood still, a little worried that the crown would fall off again, "thank you for your visit as always."

"Your Majesty," Eren's childhood friend spoke and the Titan shifter opened his mouth to say the same before closing it.

They were both suddenly gestured to the next room by her aide where the chairs would have been set out earlier in the morning and they would talk freely and continue their usual engagement with Eren.

"Mr Jaeger," she said softly just before he turned around and Mikasa stared at her as well, "a moment please."

The brunette nodded as her aide gestured to Mikasa again, the Queen not missing the cold stare she
was given, knowing she would have to address it next and resolve things with Mikasa.

Eren approached her as the door closed and she could hear the Ackerman being asked if she would like tea as her handmaiden checked all over her, moving around slowly as the Titan shifter watched.

The Queen cleared her throat and gestured with her right hand forward, lifting it in a composed manner towards Eren who stopped a few steps away from her.

"The revolution has been successful all things considered, would you not say Mr Jaeger?" Historia began, as she took a step forward towards Eren, feeling another lock of hair slip out that her handmaiden rushed back to put it in place. "Though it is unfortunate to say that some people still question your abilities…"

Eren nodded slightly, going along with appearances for the other person in the room, "it's thanks to you that such rumours have died down now right?"

The Queen answered with silence, thinking how it was that time a month ago that that meeting played out.

She had remained largely silent until then but of course she had to speak out against that.

"… Many people will swear their fealty to me and the military government in the future," Historia trailed on, feeling Emilia move back and check her again, "but true loyalty like yours is hard to come by…"

Eren blinked and frowned as Historia's eyes turned to him and he saw a small fire in the oceans. "It's thanks to your actions that it's succeeded."

"… Compared to me, your contributions are far greater. It would not be a stretch for me to say that you are the most faithful soldier to me, do you disagree?" the Queen watched the inquisitive look on the soldier's face before bringing up her hand towards him, "would you care to be the first to display a token of your loyalty?"

The Titan shifter frowned. '… Is kissing her hand a reward or something?'

"Your… Majesty?" her maid looked between the two, sensing the unique atmosphere in the air, "shall I uhh… go get your uhh…"

"That would be appreciated," Historia smiled politely as the handmaiden bowed quickly and left through the back doors, taking her leave.

They were alone together in the room. Raising her right arm forward towards him, Historia tried to prompt the Titan shifter, standing only an arm's reach away from her now.

"Who's bothering you?" Eren immediately asked, his face became intense, "is someone asking - "

"Nobody is. It's the opposite rather… though it bothers me of course, anyway" Historia cut him off, reassuming herself and waving off the conversation for later. "Don't you want the honour of being the first to kiss my hand? Or is your devotion to me wavering?"

"Yeah, I'm planning to kidnap you," he replied, taking a step forward so he was right in front of her now, "I'll take you out to a quiet secluded spot somewhere and throw that metal on your head into a river somewhere so it won't be found again."
"Hm, that doesn't sound too bad… but I've got more orphanages I want to build first before that," Historia hummed thoughtfully, "until then would you not show me your faithfulness even just as practise?"

The soldier nodded and glanced down at her outstretched hand waited patiently for him. Of course he was sure many people would kiss her hand in the traditional sense he had heard all about.

Wanting her favour, they would try and flatter the new Queen with simple gestures like that, which he knew Historia would never be affected by.

True loyalty.

Eren didn't know why she wanted him to do it first but after casting aside the small smile, he bent down on one knee, kneeling upon the carpet.

His loyalty was with Historia, not the Queen.

It wouldn't make a difference to him if other people kissed her hand before him and give such an empty promise with the brush of their lips on her knuckle.

'A true kiss…' Eren felt a bit of red flow through him imagining moving his lips like that. Even if it's just a gesture of loyalty, Historia wanted a real show of devotion compared to the empty ones she would get from then on.

He bowed, and then lifted her hand, taking it in his owns. Her hand was held out regally, indicating to kiss the lady's hand.

Her pinky and ring fingers, devoid of jewellery or seal that would be often kissed to, were positioned downwards slightly, dipping together slightly lower.

Her middle finger followed the pattern but lingered slightly higher and there was a small gap between it and her index finger.

Her thumb to the side and her whole hand rested unflinching.

He frowned a little before, bemused that Historia wanted him to be the first to kiss her hand, as though a real notion of loyalty coming first was such a big deal to her.

Taking in all the details, his own hand taking hers and just seeing how smaller hers was.

They were alone again together.

His own left hand cupped her right, his fingers together lifting gently behind hers while his thumb rested on her knuckle.

The world seemed to slow as he took in all the details of the empty room before closing his green eyes.

Lifting it slowly, he brought it to his lips.

Historia trembled slightly, hoping he didn't catch it and would continue.

He did.

She closed her own eyes as she felt his sensual lips.
They were a little rough, but so natural and real as the gentle sensation was pressed slightly on her hand and a strange flow of pleasure shot up through her.

The knight that was kissing his Queen.

She knew for sure that it wasn’t that feeling.

Historia wanted more from him.

She knew she wanted more affection than this.

The old story in that book wasn’t what she wanted from Eren.

The light flickered through both their visions.

The last thing Eren could remember was the feel of her skin.

Royalty through which he could recall memories from.

And the kiss at which place the storm set out from.

..."I, like you, am a subject of Ymir."

His father's memories.

"I am and Eldian, and I have come from beyond the walls."

His mind clicked strangely.

He was looking straight through his father's eyes.

"King of the Walls! Please, you must kill all of the Titans attacking the Walls at once. Before my wife and my children...!"

Eren stared back into Frieda's eyes.

Her true intentions and struggle bear.

As though she was trying to resist something.

"Before the people of the Walls are eaten!"'

Historia's half sister's eyes closed and reopened completely differently.

...The knife dropped out of his hand.

His own feelings suddenly welling up at seeing it.

His father's eyes changed again as it was stabbed through the hand.
A girl whose corpse was being eaten by dogs.

The strange object in the sky.

Oceans traversed for centuries past.

"You began this story."

Those words were his.

And he realised he was the one who made his father do it.

He felt it.

Eren felt it as though it was through his own hands.

The crushing and splattering of blood across the crystal halls.

His head burnt.

Flickering through three sides.

He saw Frieda and her eyes of God power at times.

It switched through to Frieda herself, seeing his own father's unfamiliar face.

And then it switched again.

As though it were someone watching it all happen.

There was nobody there when his eyes switched again.

There couldn't possibly be anyone standing there watching.

Black and white coats.

Opposing colours of opposing intentions.

The bearded man standing next to him.

Following him all this time.

A wish he could never accept.

"From here on... it won't go the way you wish."

He saw through the eyes of his father, staring down at the box, holding the syringe and Titan
spinal fluid which would be surely used on him.

The chapel behind him was destroyed, and the steaming form of his Titan lay there.

"… It will all be going Eren's way…"

He looked up to see the bearded man standing above him this time.

A son facing his father.

…

…

…

The stars above him soared in the land of eternal twilight.

The flowing light, moving infinitely in the shape of a massive tree.

The girl waiting for him.

This was place… was surely…

…

…

…

The Armoured Titan.

He was beating him.

He was beating Reiner.

…

…

…

Beyond that…

War and Hell.

Beyond that was more Hell.

…

…

…

Facing out the window, he felt the child move against his chest as it rested gently.

The end result of it all.
The trees of life in the talking wind.

And then only more darkness.

Amidst –

Beyond which... The impossible scenery laid.

"What was…"

The sun was shining through the windows.

The clock bell began ringing out in the city as it hit noon.

The blue eyed girl stared back at Eren's unreadable expression as he still held her hand.

Mid Fall of the Year 850 – 5 Weeks Ago in the Royal Palace

She scolded herself. She was worried for them all but... if she truly had to be honest...

She was worried about her one true friend... one true remaining friend at least...

"Furthermore, extra experimentation has resulted in a profound new achievement." the commander-in-chief's own aide spoke, as his other men handed out the papers to everyone at their seats, "this is the full report for our first new anti-Titan weapon."

"In Trost district, thanks to the combined efforts of the Survey Corps and the Garrison regiments, along with Eren Jaeger's Titan hardening ability, we have managed to construct a massive Titan guillotine."
Historia had heard about it from Eren in person beforehand and recalled the important meeting only yesterday that the commanders of the Survey Corps and Erwin had arrived along on one day to see the other military commander, marking almost one month since their overthrowing of the old aristocracy.

Soon after that, it was established with no attempted revolts that they could enter a less watchful policy and had secured their position as the new government.

Historia looked down, ignoring the meeting for a little to read down on the first paper which came through, approved by the majority of the council.

The meeting had taken yesterday, and the idea was accepted.

Word had gotten out to the people soon after as the newspaper reported the intentions of the new Queen.

Free housing for those orphaned or without a home from the past five years. Effective immediately, people had began finding the locations and development of old farm houses into orphanage.

To something she had not considered much, she found herself with inheritance.

Following the death of her father, the Reiss lands were already being transformed to further her wish into the orphanages.

The children of the underground and the poor trapped in Wall Sina now had a home nearby, at the place where her father would have stayed for most of the time.

Compared to the interior, she knew she had to focus on Wall Rose. She was glad at least that the underground city was becoming changed at least by her effect. She had also been suggested by her aide to secure funds and pay people to build or repair other housing and care homes.

However, much of Wall Rose was infertile or uninhabitable. There was only so much she could do even by encouraging it, the same had still been undergone albeit with only minimal aide from the old government.

For her as well to be able to make significant changes further to the population cramped in the South of Wall Rose, the operation had to succeed.

Wall Maria had to be retaken.

"This weapon is capable of crushing the napes of Titans who approach into the required area at the Wall, functioning all day without the use of cannons or other resources. With this new weapon, no soldiers need to sacrifice nor risk their lives in order to kill Titans." Zachary continued reading from next to her.

"The news paperment is fast spreading throughout the walls." The other informant spoke.

"We intend to move on to create three more of these weapons at the remaining outlier districts of Wall Rose." Yet another explained.

The Queen remained impassive, putting away the details of her meeting from yesterday happily to the side of the desk.

Zachary gestured to his attendants again and they handed another piece of paper out. Her eyes caught onto the new titled topic and her body froze as she read the contents at speed.
"However…" the commander-in-chief nodded and spoke up himself after adjusting his glasses, "it has been noted that Eren Jaeger’s Titan power is being pushed to its limits, and that further construction will not be undertaken for the time being. His body has began to suffer from internal bleeding as a result of overusing his Titan abilities, and further demands of his powers may cause life threatening effects."

Historia felt her head swim with panic. 'Internal bleeding…? Life-threatening injuries…?'

The report didn't detail too much about it, and Eren had told her some of it already. Though his hardening power had worked, he told her how his nose bled a couple times.

She could tell that he was putting up a tough front. What worried her however where the people in the council again who began speaking as she had feared.

"For the upcoming operation, we require Eren Jaeger at his absolute full capacities and therefore wish for him to rest for at least the week before without continuing Survey Corps activities." Zachary made the proposition that had come from commander Erwin and nodded along to the group which replied "no objections."

The short break was called for open discussion as the paper was being moved around for everyone's signature to be written on it.

"Hey, I though that Titan kid could just heal himself right up." The talk broke out from the usual suspects.

"Evidently not, unless the Survey Corps are either falsifying their reports for some reason." One of them shrugged away.

"I swear… isn't there some easier route we could have taken? Are we sure that this brat might even be cut out for this?" The idea of a replacement made the Queen shake as she did her best to hide it.

Historia bit her lip again.

She had heard whispers of how Eren was still considered a monster for what had happened in Stohess against Annie.

The voices merged as more and more of half of the people at the table began to agree.

"Agreed, he's just a kid after all, why couldn't we have someone better suited with this 'Power of the Titans'?"

"Yeah, a little kid is still a little kid. Are we sure there aren't any other options we could take? Why can't we give the Titan power to someone else?"

"From what we learnt in the succession ritual recorded by the Reiss family, we would require another Titan serum for that."

"True, but there have been no reports on any more or how to make them."

"If we are lucky though, and we get our hands on one, we could surely pass on the power to a more skilled soldier right?"

Her memory at the simple knowledge of what her father had told her made her hands burn, as she realised she as sharply digging her nails into them which had already left marks.
"Is the kid even capable? He was still a trainee a few months ago, what did he rank as?" The familiarly accusative MP officer began stirring up trouble.

"Hey, ask her Majesty. She served in the same corps group, did she not?" She heard someone whisper it to their neighbour though the sound managed to reach her along with pointed fingers to her from further down the table.

Historia willed her knees to bend upwards as she prepared to stand only to sit down again without raising more than a centimeter.

"Eren Jaeger..." Her voice mumbled, not carrying to either the people sitting next to her.

"Tch. What a cursed regiment." The first man said once again.

"If only we would have known sooner, we could have captured them all and gotten them interrogated." Yet another official argued the questionable methods of the Survey Corps' commander.

They had mentioned her a few more times, but they never did speak out and ask her.

She breathed in herself, doing her best to calm herself.

"That Jaeger bastard isn't reliable, we should find a way to give the power to our most loyal soldier."

Historia stood up firmly this time. The talk continued though some turned into whispers as they noticed the glittering gold upon the Queen's head.

A few seconds later, just before it all went to quiet talk, Historia opened her eyes and spoke. "Eren Jaeger is the most suitable if not only candidate for his Titan power."

He was the only to her. But for the sake of it, she couldn't lead a one-sided talk. The people didn't need to know and wouldn't care much of her relationship with Eren. She knew what they would want them to hear.

"The Founding Titan has been the root of what has been holding the military back. It is the very power that we opposed and that the old government would have used to lead us to extinction."

Using such inclusive thoughts, she wished she could snort aloud at whether there even was an "us" in the room as she targeted those of opposing thought.

"There are factors to the Founding Titan power that we still do not understand yet. It was only thanks to Eren Jaeger and his father that the Founding Titan power was taken from those who would be enslaved to continue us to our ruin."

Her half-sister had been the one that was killed. She could never come to terms with how that day took away the first person to ever care for her, but knowing the reason, she couldn't hate nor forgive the man who did it.

"For over 100 years, nobody had been able to accomplish this. Eren's father left the Titan power to his son, Eren Jaeger and entrusted him specifically out of anyone else. If there is a reason or a condition which we are not yet aware of, it could be that Eren Jaeger is the only one able to access the power of the Founding Titan as he once did."

The conditions were set. Only someone with royal blood can use the full power of the Founding
Titan. Yet Eren had used it that once. Remembering that sight herself in Krista's last moments.

"At the very least, as the one who has managed to bring humanity's first victory over the Titans, driven the enemies out of hiding and provided us with the solution to reclaiming Wall Maria, Eren Jaeger may be the only one able to use the Titan power this effectively. We lack the information to know of any possible risks with what may happen to anyone else."

The room was silent as she finished and steadied herself. Show no signs of weakness. That was what she had been told.

Remaining reserved with no open emotion, she bore the questioning looks of all the people in the room.

"… As someone who has fought alongside Eren Jaeger, I can verify the facts you would have read in the reports over the past month. Considerations aside, there is no means by which to give Eren Jaeger's power to anyone else, even if there would be reason for such a thing."

Historia sat down, feeling a blast of uncomfortable feeling in her stomach that she did her best to ignore and returned everyone’s gazes until they looked away.

"Quite, it is as her Majesty has said," Darius Zachary began the talk again, "there is no method by which this is possible even if we did somehow reach such circumstances. Further talk on the matter will not get as any further. I will consider that case closed."

Historia breathed a little slowly in relief, so that nobody would notice.

"Good job your Majesty," she heard her aide whisper from her right and nod at her approvingly almost like an aunt would.

She gave a brief smile in gratitude as she felt the confidence change within her a little. She was annoyed by the snorts and some disapproving glances sent her way for the rest of the meeting, but she remained steadfast to her argument.

There was no way she could not defend Eren when it came to such remarks.

"The time is soon approaching." The commander-in-chief summarized the closing. "The Survey Corps will soon get their weapons ready and go to Shinganshina. Is there anything else than anyone wishes to add."

Historia briefed in again and stood up from her chair once more glancing to her left. "If acceptable, I have a proposition regarding Eren Jaeger's temporary suspension from the Survey Corps' examinations."

---

**Evening After Eren Kissed Historia's Hand – Survey Corps Headquarters**

Eren sat stirring the boiled stew, half only being able to remember the palace food that Historia had been nice enough to share. Compared to that, he mused how she must have been on the first day when gasping and staring like a confused rabbit about what had never seen such delicacies before.

He was gathered in a dining hall, ignorant to all the commotion as he kept on thinking back.

It was truly befuddling.

Yet for some reason expected in Eren's mind.
It was of course, Historia.

She was constantly on his mind ever since that day.

Historia.

Powerful and Real.

Historia.


He couldn't get tired of repeating the unusual name.

But it was odd.

Of course Eren thought of people, many different ones.

As much as he didn't want to admit it… he had spent a long time cursing three names two and a half months ago,

He had cursed them and cursed them.

He cursed their names and cried them to sleep when no-one had been looking.

It had been the same almost 5 years ago.

When his mother had died, he couldn't stop thinking and weeping about it for death.

But this…

This was different.

Historia.

Ever since that day in the cave…

His whole mind seemed to connect with hers.

Historia had freed him.

Thrown away the first of the chains which shackled him.

As if he had seen something he had been searching his whole life for.

His comrades had come and unsealed the next shackle.

The last two chains had been fading on their own, being exposed the most to the elements and the ongoing strains on it, they had broken once Historia had struck the ends of it fiercely.

You could argue that Eren had been the one to pull the chains off in the end.

But he had only been able to do that because he felt an incredible amount of strength welling up.

What had been the cause of that?

Eren knew.
There was no way he could deny it.

Historia had freed him.

It was from there that he felt like he had a strength unrivaled by that of his past self.

Historia.

She was the cause of it and the vitality which kept bumping through his body even now.

Historia.

She was the cause of it and the vitality which kept bumping through his body even now.

Historia.


He could pry her off his mind.

He had been spending a lot of time recently with her as well. Visiting her on any excuse he could get caught up in.

Well…

They were… friends…

There was nothing unusual about that.

They were very close friends as well.

Sure, some people can say that only properly becoming friends happened 2 months ago.

But… it was special.

And that's all that mattered.

Other people probably didn't understand.

But that didn't matter.

Eren felt Historia was content so long as just one person was there for her.

"You know that so much has happened recently…" Armin spoke softly at the now silent table, "just who is it that's behind the attacks…"

Eren looked around, noticing that Connie had left in the vacant spot, and glanced to Armin's half finished soup.

' A nightmare...' Eren regained his thoughts on what Armin had just said. In a few days time, they would be moving to recover Wall Maria. To do that… they would need to drive back Reiner and the rest. And… the true enemy… behind them… The Titans whom he had vowed to massacre in what felt like an old childhood now. 'Humans just being tormented by nightmares… just like I was once…'

Keeping the memory to himself, he struggled to remember.

' There must have been a time when I was a Titan like that, too... but I don't remember a thing about it…'

The time and memories that couldn't resolve.
'All I remember is what my father saw as I ate him...'

The memories of that day. Just the night before.

He had seen it the moment he had kissed Historia's hand just this morning.

…

The voice that had spoken to his father.

Historia's half-sister and the god eyes that didn't belong to her.

That voice that had been his own, telling his father to do it.

…

And the imaginary things that came after.

…

He struggled to wonder as to what it could mean.

He had not told anyone about it.

Neither the commander, the captain or Hanji.

Nor even Armin and Mikasa.

It felt almost like a dream.

He could hardly remember it sometimes, not sure if such information could be reliable at all.

Or rather… Eren felt something telling him to keep it a secret.

Historia had cast his a doubtful look after that but Mikasa had instead entered the room again since they were taking too long.

It wasn't something he felt there was need to share.

Memories of his father.

He had informed Hanji only that much, saying how they were different this time and led up past it. The section commander had nodded but agreed it wasn't anything new.

Eren felt himself stepping into a dangerous territory now for not informing anyone of this.

But he couldn't make sense of the strange flash…

…

They weren't memories.

That was the only thing he had concluded.

He only needed to report any actual memories that came from his experiments with Historia.

There was no need to report.
It was surely a dream.

Or…

'Is this another power of the Founding Titan?'

He was sure it could be the only answer, pushing aside the other thought.

It had happened because he had kissed Historia's hand.

Because of that he had seen his father walking… as per… his… his memories...

Everything appeared wrong.

Something felt different in his eyes when he saw… that nightmare...

…

"But… it's not just nightmares…" His best friend continued. "I bet… there's more on the other side of the walls…"

"What…?" Eren noticed the sad gaze in Armin's eye for a moment. Had he missed something he said? For some reason, the look made made him feel a pang of strange feeling, as though eh had given the wrong response.

"Sheesh, Eren…" Jean neighed inwards to him, "all you've been doing lately is sitting around silent to yourself. You getting deaf already?"

Eren snorted back at him, seeing Mikasa stare at him from opposite the table and then glance down pointedly at his bowl. He sighed and went ahead to eat it, mentioning a silent apology to her in his head.

"Tch, when you do speak, it's always a grumble from you now," Jean eyed him down seriously now, resting his chin in his elbow, "what you need to be doing is remembering that man. You saw him when those memories came back to you in the cave, right?"

Eren blinked, nodding as he recalled the instant when Historia touched his back.

"Whoever this Survey Corps man was who met your dad…" Jean's watched Eren's eye harden, as though recalling some familiarity, "the day he escaped from the cave."

"Yeah… he met my dad on that day and in that situation…" he lifted the warm drink to his mouth, took a sip and put it down again, scratching his head, trying to recall something, "… he has to know something. And anyway… I feel like I've seen that man somewhere myself…"

"Are you sure they're your memories, not Dr Jaeger's?" Armin asked as Eren nodded his head in confirmation.

"Why don't you try hitting your head against something?" Sasha suggested.

"Yeah that's right," Eren flinched a little at the gaze Jean directed at him, "you sure love to spend time holding hands with Historia, no matter how many times the same results happen, maybe what you need is a headbutt from the instructor."

Eren scoffed, biting back a reply.
5 years ago.

That day.

He made eye contact with Mikasa who stared back at him curiously just as she did that day.

The Survey Corps man.

Confessing all his failures.

The old woman holding the only remaining part of her son.

"Hey… tomorrow... we're going to see Head Instructor Keith Shadis!"

---

_Mid Fall of the Year 850 – 1 Month After Historia's Ascension to the Throne_

Little by little, she was grasping the picture.

Picking up the letter, the Queen began reading with marginally practiced enunciation.

"Proceeding in with the current topic from last week; the results of investigation into the interior Military Police has provided the possibility of developing the arsenal available to the Survey Corps. The details can be found in the extensive reports in front of you, explaining the materials, process, expenditure, usage, availability etc. For important discussion today, is the matter of the distribution — "

"Tch," Historia held back from biting her lip as she was interrupted again. She didn't have to look to guess that it was the MP in the middle seat to the right. She had been shown his profile and could guess he was about to suggest anything for his own personal military police section to get extra weapons to boast for show. "We should arm the Military Police first, particularly those like my brigades who are sitting on guard around the interior prison camps and —"

"I wasn't finished," the Queen's voice spoke up and silenced the room.

The official blinked in surprise at her, still technically a child at her youth looking down at him seriously. Her eyes were like cold mirrors, reflecting his own thoughts back at him.

Telling him that he was the child here. The middle aged man grit his teeth slightly and scoffed before folding his arms and leaning back in his chair. The assembly gazed at the Queen, bothered by her increasing involvement in matters but unwilling to question her.

There was no reason to anyway, she was carrying on in the proceedings and coming into her role slowly and directing the flow of meetings. It meant that they were getting less time to argue their side forward but it was cutting time and leaving them more to their own devices.

Historia held back her sigh and didn't screw her nose slightly as her aide had pointed out of her. Collecting herself calmly she continued, "regarding the distribution of newly developed technology at this early stage to the rest of the military branches — "

Spinning the wheel of threads to her new mask, she made sure to not flinch and show any sign of discontent or falter.

She was the Queen only in name.

But her name could do many things when used in the right way.
Late Fall of the Year 850 - Military Cadets Training Camp Southern Division Instructor
Keith Shadis's Office

It had only been not much more than 4 months since they were last here, yet the place already was unfamiliar.

Sitting at the table before them all, the instructor Keith Shadis seemed different, news of his accomplishments and Titan power no doubt reaching him.

"Eren… You remind me of your mother," the instructor looked at him and answered him by name for the first time.

"…!" The Titan shifter's hand's raked against the table as he tried to stay seated.

"But…" the bald haired man looked old suddenly, as though at the end of his life, "the fangs lurking beneath those eyes… are unmistakably your father's."

"…" Thinking back to all the days, the brunet wondered how much it could have solved if he asked years ago. He was about to rise angrily, but the last comment stopped him. "Tell me, please. Tell me everything you know!"

He remained seated instead, begging the instructor to speak.

The fangs beneath his eyes.

"To be blunt… I don't know anything," Shadis answered him, "but if you'd like to hear a story with no benefit to humanity whatsoever, I'll tell you. I was just a bystander, but here's what I remember."

Late Spring of the Year 849 – The 5th Day after Departure

How long has he been traveling by now?

He had been made the leader of squad 8.

Crossing an unfair length of distance in too little of time with too little sleep.

Eren realised how exhausted he was and tried opening his eyes, feeling his head swimming at least on something comfortable.

…

'Why did I have to be the leader…' he thought. The result didn't matter to him even if he did scored badly, he wasn't aiming for the MPs. But it would reflect on his comrades as well.

His will flared, realising how feeble he felt.

He couldn't wipe out the Titans if he was like this.

Eren groaned as he tried to sit himself up. As he did so, he slowly opened his eyes to the smell of burning wood as he saw the small campfire outside.

His head felt like it was splitting open, the moment he moved a single muscle, and a great weight seemed to capture him.
He looked around him, and saw that his head was resting on someone's lap. His eyes looked up, to find the sapphire coloured diamonds looking into his own.

"Krista...? Where am I?" Eren muttered. Krista seemed to stare unbelievably at him, making him feel increasingly uncomfortable as a cold sweat seemed to build for an unknown reason.

"Eren... you're... already dead – cold..." Her voice felt colder than him.

"Huh...?" He struggled and managed to raise his heavy, warm body. "I feel... warm?"

It did feel cold to him now that she mentioned it. Yet on the interior, it felt warm and comforting. He wanted to go back to sleeping.

"You're ill right now; Reiner's gone out to get you some medicine at the nearest town from here," Krista updated him on the situation, "don't try to move. We well... haven't got any pillows so um... I thought... this could help..."

Resting his head into a her lap, he grumbled as he realised she had to be the one watching him. Then again, he didn't really want to wake up in Reiner or Bertholdt's lap either. Actually he didn't want to wake up in anyone's lap.

"I can um..." Krista fumbled, seeing his discontent, "get you something to eat if you're hungry, but umm... the water's no good... Reiner said you probably drank it and the bug in it poisoned you..."

Eren grumbled, feeling his mouth was indeed dry and too hot. He couldn't move properly. He was struggling to think properly.

"No... nothing..." He replied. The brunet wondered why he hadn't considered checking for fresh water. They had been traveling for 5 days now, and the waterskins were meant to be cleaned more frequently so this didn't happen.

Eren sighed and consigned himself to laying on the back of Krista's lap.

He avoided looking up at her and she did the same.

The silence continued for an hour.

He tried to get strength into his movements as much as possible.

"... Eren...?"

The was only the two of them in the tent, he wondered annoyingly why she needed to call his name.

"Yeah?"

"... Do you hate me?"

...

His ears were ringing a bit and his head ached but he wondered why Krista would ask such a thing.

"... No..."

His reply came with surprising difficulty.
"I..." He said the truth just as always, wondering why it was so hard this time. "You're not as bad as I thought you were..."

She wasn't a complete phony. A fake fabricated completely.

Somewhere... he felt some reason to her. Some real wish in the act she played.

'I... don't want to regret not giving my all in a matter of life and death."

She had said just as much a day or two ago.

As though she knew she would die someday sooner or later.

They were both going to join the Survey Corps.

He knew it too. Sooner or later, he would die as well.

But he swore it wouldn't be until he drove them all out.

"But I don't like you either..."

Eren couldn't stand that forced expression she always made. Even if she was trying to live something truly, playing the act with all she could, seeing her act like that made his blood boil.

"... I see." Krista responded simply.

...

That had not gone well.

Eren decided another hour's worth of silence and uncomfortable fidgeting said as much.

---

Late Fall of the Year 850 - Military Cadets Training Camp Southern Division Instructor
Keith Shadis's Office

"The instructor was right... I wasn't special at all. It's just... that I was the son of a special man," his reply silenced Hanji's outburst. "In the end, that was the only reason I was given the Power of the Titans. I'm glad I can be sure of that now..."

The memories he had seen made his head swim on the thought a little longer.

He hadn't yet come to understand what they meant yet.

But it was clear to him now at least that he could be replaced.

Someone else could do a far better job than him.

He was by no means going to give up the life Historia had given back to him.

But it didn't change the reality of him.

That was what he had been thinking for a little while now.

"Your mother... Carla said this..." The instructor was the first to break the silence.

...
"Do you really have to be special?"

..."Do you really need people's recognition?"

..."I don't think so."

The group lead by captain Levi began pulling themselves up onto their mounts.

"At the very least, not when it comes to this child."

...

"He doesn't need to become great."

...

"Why should he have to better than anyone else?"

...

The ride began homewards.

Somehow, the air was more alive to the Titan Shifter now.

The breeze was warm.

...

"He's already great."

The weight seemed to lift off him.

"Because he was born into this world."

---

**The 6th Day after Departure**

Bertholdt was wandering outside, with little purpose in each step. Reiner had gone out to the nearest town, and Annie had gone looking for water.

He had wanted to go with her but the words got stuck in his throat just as always. The holder of the Colossal Titan reasoned that Annie was much more suitable alone. He'd only hold her back. Just as he always weighed Reiner down.

Sighing softly, he silently exited the thickets with a pile of food in his arms. Since Eren was sick and he was on guard outside, he had decided to try and be helpful.

At this rate, whatever their score wasn't looking too promising. Bertholdt didn't know how important the exam was but at the worst it could mean failing to make it to the top ten and entering the Military Police as planned.

4 years. He had last seen his sick father 4 years ago. Assuming the mission did succeed, and he did make it back home, he wondered if there would be anyone left there.
Was there any point in trying to return?

After all he had done... he didn't feel it would be too bad if he died here.

Laying some logs into the fire outside and after checking that the horses were tied up for the
dozenth time, he decided to proceed inside.

He wondered if perhaps he wasn't such a burden then they wouldn't be stuck like this. He didn't
blame Eren in the slightest, rather...

The green eyes shone with a will he didn't have.

The way he always knew what to do.

Something that made him special.

Bertholdt wondered if he ever could find something similar.

Pulling back the covers of the tent he had put up, he wondered what else he could do to help his
sick... comrade.

...

Bertholdt kept his eyes down as he entered.

Perhaps they weren't close but Bertholdt wondered if Eren perhaps considered him an
acquaintance.

He didn't deserve such a thing. The tall shifter felt uncomfortable at considering the words. He still
heard sometimes.

About how Eren would go silent and struggled to sleep at night while he laid just above him
without knowing it was him.

If anything though... Bertholdt wanted Eren to be the one to take his life. That way at least, his
revenge would be satiated... and he could rest knowing that at least Eren wouldn't go on to destroy
himself.

Blinking softly, he looked up as he stepped forward and stopped.

Eren was awake now, staring back at him and trying to move away from Krista who also looked
back and adjusted her lap awkwardly.

"..." Bertholdt narrowed his eyes a little, knowing the type of person Krista was, however... there
was something wrong with this picture.

The stared at each other for several minutes, Eren wrapped up in blankets and struggling to move
his mouth.

"... I-I'll be goi-" Bertholdt stammered uncontrollably, turning around while sweating very
nervously.

"A-Ah no wait!" Krista called back and looked down at Eren and back at him, "u-um... I feel it'd be
better if you swapped..."

Bertholdt stopped and looked at her. Doubt swimming in his stomach that turned like a knot. He
doubted that if Eren really knew who he was.

Krista didn’t wait for his answer and laid Eren’s head back down on the collected coats they were using and left quietly with a short thanks.

The tall soldier looked behind as the usually cheerful girl left and stepped back in side, wandering around for a little before sitting down next to Eren. "… Sorry… can I get you anything."

"… Nahh… it's fine..." His voice sounded dry but full of forceful feeling as he glanced to see the brunet laying down.

"Sorry… we've not got any water..." the elder brunet spoke timidly, thinking desperately of some comforting words. None came.

"… Stop…" Eren instead muttered.

"… Uh...?" Bertholdt blinked at him, seeing him struggle a little.

"… Apologising like that…for things that aren't your fault…" Eren eyed him back and made him freeze, looking at him equally. "... Stop that..."

Bertholdt ’s tongue rolled inwards, keeping the thoughts welled up inside.

If only Eren knew.

For some reason… he looked more comfortable with him than earlier with Krista.

He nodded after a while and the returned to staring around.

Hours passed with painful slowness.

He adjusted the sheets, tended to the little candle fire near Eren, and offered him food to eat which Eren rejected.

"Hey… are you still aiming for the MPs," Eren asked him once.

"Um... yeah..." Bertholdt looked down knowing how Eren thought of them, "... I guess… U haven't really changed since back then... I don't have it in me..."

"That's not true," Eren's words were strong, fire resolved in his eyes again.

"... Oh... I... I’m not so sure about that..." Bertholdt denied it, turning away from Eren's intensity and unknowing.

His stomach hurt again.

He considered what Eren had said.

There lay only the clutching and sinking of his stomach each time he thought about him... just as always.

…

They didn't talk much at all.

In the silence, with only his single greatest victim as companion.
He wanted to spill everything.

Whenever Eren was nearby, and he saw him suffering, he wanted to confess everything.

...

But he couldn't.

"Hey, still feeling dead for the count?" Reiner called when he returned, nodding at Bertholdt before leaning down over to Eren. "Here, brought you something, dunno how much good it'll will do you though, but it's something."

Reiner had gone to the Dauper village, where Sasha came from if Bertholdt recalled, delivering the supplies as they were instructed.

The next stop would be Trost and then back to the Trainee Camps. Given Eren's condition, they weren't going to make it within a day and would have to face whatever consequences happened.

Whether their next step into joining the MPs or not was accomplished, the mission would continue some other ways.

He had started the search for the coordinate already.

Bertholdt felt like his time was coming soon. He decided that as much as he wanted to offer up his life to Eren, he would go on with whatever role he was told to fulfill.

A Week after Eren and the rest of Squad 8 had Returned

Eren breathed in and knocked his hand twice on the door of the instructor's office.

They had missed the schedule by 2 days, though they had completed all the instructions in the end. They had taken the crates from the Reeves company and Trost and returned just as planned. Apparently however they were one of the last squads to return with all the equally tired group.

Eren had seen the board which displayed all the rankings of how well each group performed against the other 46 squads just an hour ago.

Second to last spot. Feeling disappointed would be an understatement. 46th spot. It was like he was being told he wasn't suited to be a leader.

"Enter. Unless it's you again Springer then I'll deal with your shit later." He heard the tired, hard voice behind the door. Opening the door carefully, he stepped in to see the commandant at his desk, sorting through papers.

Closing the door behind him, he marched forward calmly and made the salute in front of him, "Sir!"

The old man looked up, his wrinkles clear on his face as he noted who it was. "Jaeger?"

"... It's... about the exam we did... a week ago. Squad 8, I uh..." he fumbled his words from the rather intimidating bold man but kept his salute clear, "... the failure lies with me. I don't know how much this exam will affect our final grades, but... some of my squadmates would be aiming for the MPs..."
His tall comrade was always so quiet and gentle, but he was always working hard. He didn't know about Annie either.

But for either of them, if it meant they became ineligible because of him…

"The blame lies solely on me," Eren repeated. "Sir, I have no intention of joining the Military Police. So if… possible… it's fine if I have to pay the penalty in some way, but if possible, please could you not disqualify the others from ranking with honours."

"There's no need for that." The elder man answered.

"… No need…?" Eren considered what it meant as the man looked down and pulled another piece of paper to himself.

"Your result is disappointing but not unjustified," the instructor explained simply. "Your squad wasn't really expected to complete it. Less than a dozen squads were able to finish, much more than last year. Your ranking was due to your overextension."

"Huh…?" Eren kept the salute held firm, keeping his back straight.

"You may have screwed up this time, but I'm not kicking any of your group's asses this time. This test won't revoke any of your squadmate's right to enter the top ten either." Shadis informed him and then looked up. "Is that it?"

"… Y-Yes, sir!" Eren nodded and clamped his fist again as he was dismissed.

"Jaeger." Shadis stopped him again. Turning around, he saw the former commander of the Survey Corps make a seeming nostalgic expression hidden behind his hard eyes. "You won't turn your back on the Survey Corps?"

"… Sir?" He turned round, considering if he was meant to salute again. "… Of course not, sir…?"

"Do you really think you can do it? After you see it outside the walls, if you manage to survive it, when you return back for the first time... Do you think you can do it? When there's nothing left for you out there, do you think you can keep going outside the walls again?"

---

1 Week Before the Operation to Reclaim Wall Maria – Royal Palace

Eren had been being led to Historia's meeting room by a servant this time. He hadn't said anything when he was told the Queen was currently speaking to someone else but he did feel it was a shame she didn't come see him personally now that more servants had been checked and hired.

The male servant gestured to the door, opening it for him before he left and Eren entered. He caught sight of Historia turning to him, the light in her face returning again.

Opposite her, he saw a man he had never seen before, lounging on the chair that creaked when he leaned back and putting something into his mouth lazily. "Humh? Is this your next visitor Majesty?"

"Yes that is correct," Historia said standing up and gesturing for the guards at the sides of the room, "it seems you've overstayed your time now. I have business with this Survey Corps gentleman right now."
The noble scoffed and pulled himself up on his feet as Eren got a good look at him. He looked little more than a decade older than him, his overblown and puffy cheeks wobbled a little, still stuffed with whatever he was eating.

His attire spoke of his highborn raise, though he wasn't the most heavyweight person Eren had seen before, the lavish lifestyle he was given was written all over him as he eyed Eren scornfully. His eyes narrowed at the Survey Corps symbol, sensing as though he was familiar.

"Fine then, I'll take my leave now. But I'll be sure to visit you again, my lovely Queen," the noble said and bowed deeply before leaving, trying to catch the Queen's attention. "I'll gladly take your hand in marriage whenever you are ready."

Dark thoughts suddenly swarmed up like a sudden storm descending into him and threatening to bubble to the surface. His body went icy and his stomach felt sick, wanting to hurl out other this man.

The noble passed him and Eren had to throw everything down into himself to not hit him and pin him against the wall.

As soon as the doors closed, the Titan shifter watched the guards follow him to escort him out, as though they knew he was trouble already.

"Who was that?" Eren clenched his teeth a little too hard.

Historia snarled, poking her head back at him.

'Good,' Eren thought, 'she's not courting anyone without my approval, let alone that pig.'

"That was Marquess Lovof," his blonde friend replied as she gestured over to a different room.

"Marquess?" Eren couldn't remember what each titles meant but he could see the type of character he was, "so he's a bigshot licking off from the floor his daddy's feet stepped on."

Historia stumbled and broke in a massive series of coughs as she saw the remaining guard sleepily follow them who she waved off.

"Yeah, basically… his father isn't the most agreeable in the council but his son is… like you saw," Historia looked around and briefed a little sigh of relief, "… but Eren…"

"What?" he said uncaringly, still biting down on his fury.

"… Be careful what you say about that guy around here, the sounds travels in these halls…” she warned him seriously.

"What are they going to do? Lock me up at this point in time?" he argued.

"Well… that is true but… be careful," she warned him again seriously rubbing his hands delicately, "there's other ways they can hurt you in-"

"No they can't," Eren insisted, putting his foot down, "I won't let them hurt you."

"I'm not the one in danger here… they will notice if the Queen's gone missing, but..." the blonde sighed, taking a chair for herself just as Eren did opposite her in the study room. "His father was arrested for trying to oppose the Survey Corps a few years ago I heard, though he hasn't made any actions against the military during the revolution… he's managed to save his influence as a result."
"Let him try," Eren snorted again, stopping as he felt Historia was warning him on how his other friends were far less protected. "Is that thing married?"

"Um yeah, if I recall he's married into another noble's household, but his wife's family was taken into custody while they managed to get away," the blonde pulled forward, grasping his hand and pulling it towards her, looping his fingers into them, "though strangely… I hear they still haven't found his wife even though there are signs she was last at home with him."

"Maybe he ate her," Eren suggested.

Historia snorted just as much as him and held back a cold laugh to herself while coughing a little and trying to regain herself at Eren's straight face.

"W-Well then… you don't have to worry about me when it comes to taking down Titans," she managed to muster after a little while as her best friend sighed and leaned forward again.

He brought her hand again forward and closer to his lips. Pressing them down delicately, Historia watched and gently hummed at Eren's closed eyes, trying to find something.

It was the next step they took after Eren's pressing his lips to her skin seemed to cause some reaction to them both when he did so a week ago.

The Titan shifter pulled away after a little while, inhaling a bit more air as she felt the hot warmth exhaled from his mouth tickle her skin.

He opened his mouth, and Historia hoped he would tell her.

Whatever it was he saw when he first did it.

Each time he hesitated, and pressed his lips down and she felt his sensual movements on her.

Why did he seem so scared?

Each time he kissed her, the brief contact kept telling her that.

Trying to desperately see it again. Hoping as though whatever it was that he saw wasn't real and he had mistaken it for something else. Struggling intensely to find something else.

The doors opened suddenly without a knock and two people walked in without having noticed them inside.

"Which is why I'm saying, if your operation doesn't go as planned then —" one of the men was a person who sat on the council, whom Historia had mixed feelings about. "Ah, excuse me your Majesty, we weren't aware you were in here."

The second man blinked easily, composed as always just as Historia quickly withdrew her hand and Eren sat up, opening his eyes after he had been kissing Historia's hand which he worried a little, feeling as though Erwin Smith had just seen them.

If he had, he made no comment on them and simply addressed the matter while gesturing to the pile of papers in the corner of the room. "Excuse us for the intrusion. We were just going to find some records."

"Ah yes, of course," the Queen nodded, feeling her heart beat fast as though she had just been caught doing something naughty, "please go ahead."
Eren and Historia made eye contact and slowly moved their hands forward as the men passed, glancing at them as they pressed their hands together and closed their eyes, partly to not make any embarrassing eye contact.

They heard the sorting of piles as the two men discussed internal affairs and finances, talking of liabilities and shares in given scenarios.

"Alright," the commander nodded to the man, accepting the conditions of it for his big gamble. "I'll send you all the files once I've finished them."

The official nodded before leaving first while Erwin glanced over it again for a moment before turning to the two at the table, holdings hands in a curious fashion.

Two young people, drawn to each other.

"Trying to find memories of the past Kings?" Erwin asked them easily, glancing down at their shared hands, full of other feelings besides that.

"A-Ah well…" Eren and Historia stumbled for words and nodded, "yeah… we've not had much luck but we know for a fact it worked in the cave."

The commander nodded, understanding the situation. And seeing other intentions below surface level.

"Well it's fine," the commander said, before leaving them. "The answers should come soon one way or another."

He looked away, having long turned away from the companionship of the one he once held the hand of long ago.

Secrets bound in chains, that could not be undone by force, only at the proper time.

"Sorry for the interruption again, your Majesty," the middle aged man said as he opened the door before turning around again.

She had thrown her own gamble, at some point gaining the courage to convince him.

The Queen stared back at him and nodded, holding the same impressive strength she still had.

"Eren," keeping his thin smile, he glanced over at the Titan shifter.

"Commander?" He had discussed with his leader all that he had progressed in the past 2 months and they had reviewed all of his powers on the carriage ride to the capital.

"Your father, Grisha entrusted you with that power and those memories," Erwin spoke simply, "even if you feel responsible for his death, he's left you to find out the rest."

The man who had caused the death of his father years ago left the young couple who had caused the death of theirs in this age. Closing the door behind him, without waiting for Eren's answer.

"Ah… " Eren froze for a little, a core point struck. He was unable to give a reply for a little while as Historia waited patiently for him. He imagined that's why the commander left, leaving the answer that Eren needed for himself.

"Eren…?" Historia called his name after a while, sensing him bring her hand to his lips again silently, as she pondered on the commander's words.
He looked up and nodded at her. She returned it and watched him approach her skin again.

The sight flashed through her. It was only one moment before it disappeared. One scene that she saw. The now long brown haired boy, who she knew without doubt was Eren, mouthing the words to her.

Mid Spring of the Year 849 – Trainee Corps Dinner Hall

"Hey… doesn’t she always seem kinda lonely," Hannah spoke up once at the dinner table, changing the discussion that Christa had been pretending to listen to, "maybe we should invite her to our table?"

The group’s attention turned to the corner of the room again at which Annie was eating quietly alone the whole time, besides being passed by Eren once who had stopped to chat to her for a little while and swing his legs around to indicate something while talking to her in admiration.

Christa didn’t know much but she had seen Eren on occasion practicing in hidden spots at which Annie was sometimes teaching him all sorts of stuff. Or most of the time, just beating him down as far as she had seen or heard.

After Eren had left her, she remained just as expressionless as before, as the conversation turned into gossip over the boy until Sasha had suddenly brought up Franz to Hannah and the conversation had circled back.

"She looks fine to me," Ymir commented from beside her as she swallowed a large chunk of bread in one bite and slapped Sasha’s hand away, "if she wanted people to come near her, she wouldn't be glaring at everything like that."

Christa couldn’t help but feel her inside tingle a little, the role of herself that she was carrying spoke in half agreement.

Annie was practically casting out a cold feeling from herself, pushing away everyone else and not wishing to be a part of them.

As though she wanted to erect a wall around her and be left in her own little world.

"’ey where’s Mina t’day?" Sasha talked with a mouthful of stuffed with food.

"Oh she said she was ill in the morning," Hannah answered, "come to think of it, besides Eren and her, I’ve never seen her talk to anyone."

Ymir tap her legs with her own under the table, telling Krista to eat more. Turning back to the table, she took her best friend’s advice and did so. She then turned again, over her shoulder seeing the lonely blonde girl.

She didn't get along with anyone. Her eyes felt hidden, and her heart closed.

"I'll try speaking to her," Krista said simply before picking up her plate and moving, hearing the other people at her table trying to call her back.

She moved through the room as some people turned to look at her and invite her to join them. Krista shook her head each time and politely declined as she reached the other blonde.

Annie’s cold eyes looked up at her, studying her simply. "… What?"
"Mind if I join you?" Krista beamed at her as she would for anyone. The blue eyes, similar to hers but with a duller beam and fiercer icyness to them, regarded her a little longer before she turned away.

Setting her plate down, opposite the openly lonely girl, she took her silence as acceptance.

She ate a few spoonfuls of her broth as Annie did the same, turning her spoon after scooping up some broth and turning it, letting a mushroom mixed with the stew to drop down back into the bowl.

"Hey Annie, do you want to come eat with the rest of us?" Krista tried to begin the conversation, the girls uninterested face remained unchanged.

"Us?" The colder blue eyed girl questioned.

"Yeah, like I mean me and... you'd be one of us too," the popular girl insisted as she felt the instant rejection build up more for some reason. "But I mean, it'll just be at the table with me, Ymir, Sasha and Hannah too and uhh... Mikasa sometimes joins us too... and Mina as well and - !"

"No thanks." The cold girl firmly rooted herself.

"Ah well Mikasa isn't with us today, so you don't have to worry about -" The smaller girl tried again.

"Just go back to your friends already," she looked up but was unable to bring a glare at the blonde opposite her, "there's no point in playing or pretending to be friends or someone you're not, is there?"

Annie's words gripped the other blonde's heart. Her words died in her throat and she seemed to relax.

Krista blinked, staring back from blue to blue of similar coloured orbs.

"... Ah..." she fumbled her words, suddenly realising she had dropped her act.

She had to be a good girl.

That was all that was left for her.

Met against Annie's look, she felt herself unable to pick it up again.

"... I..." Krista tried to speak in defiance.

Her heart pounding had slowed now, feeling that she wasn't exposed here.

It wasn't like that time almost a year ago.

Compared to how Eren confronted her... Annie's sudden grab at her felt milder... but not dissimilar in a strange way.

Examining the steel eyes, she realised that she was perhaps being tested.

She recalled Ymir's words, barely a few months ago on the snowy mountains.

If Annie had asked her something like this back then, she could have walked it off.
"But you have to promise me..." Krista recalled the freckled girl's words still, "when I'll reveal my secret... you'll go back to living by your old name."

...

Ymir still kept onto her strangely worded secret.

Instead, she was left to only left with doubt for now that she hadn't been able to resolve.

Looking deeper into Annie's eyes, they were like reflecting mirrors, realising that they were reflecting her own eyes just as much as her own.

"Do you want to spend your final moments like that?" Annie prodded her again.

It wasn't a challenge that Ymir had made her question herself over.

Krista looked up, thinking of an answer to the genuine question.

A genuine answer.

"... What other choice is there..." Krista spoke.

Her death was going to happen.

No matter how she struggled against it, sooner or later, the unwanted girl was going to die just as they wanted.

"So you won't go against the flow?" Annie asked again.

The sound around them didn't register her anymore.

Instead she felt a strange feeling akin to her.

"... I don't know..." The feeling which would lead her to pain still remained in her, shifting in her reply.

She buried it deeply along with that name and her ties to it.

"... Would you go against them... those who made you end up here..." Krista asked her instead.

"... Who knows..." The mysterious blonde returned the same answer.

She didn't know anything about Annie's past. She doubted Mina or anybody else did either.

For some reason though, she felt comfortable with sharing the table with her.

"Do you feel like an ordinary girl like that?" Annie pointed behind her, the setting returning to her head as she saw her friends looking at her.

"..." Her silence gave the unanswerless answer.

"Well whatever," Annie leaned back and began eating the now cold soup, "I'm sure it's not all such a bad thing to try and be ordinary like that."

"..." Krista stared in silence for a little longer, glancing back again to her table as Annie ignored her again.
Turning back around, she watched the blonde enigmatic girl again.

It was clear to her that she wouldn't join the rest of them.

Annie was different to her like that.

She had no intention of trying to fit in and be someone she's not… unlike herself.

"What? Did you want something else?" The cold blonde glanced at her again, waiting for her to leave.

Krista stared back at her, unaware of the glare she was sending her way.

Moving her hand down, she moved her hand to her soup and took a spoonful of her own.

Cold and tasteless.

"… No… nothing else," Krista answered.

She made no move to leave.

The two lonely, blue eyed, blonde girls shared the table alone, Annie's glare setting everyone else away.

A strange feeling of comfort.

Krista felt something akin to comforting snow under which she was born.

They weren't exactly friends.

Sitting opposite the blonde, she somehow felt closer to her true self.

Annie didn't push her away.

Late Fall of the Year 850 – Wall Sina Orphanage 3 Days Before the Operation to Reclaim Wall Maria

Picking up the bag given to him, the children practically swarmed him with questions and requests. So went the relaxing week for the Titan shifter.

"Hey, hey, are we really going to get a home for free?!" the new children asked him as he led them, carrying the few possessions they did have for them as the latest group of kids arrived at the orphanage.

"Yeah, don't worry, the Queen has got it all covered," Eren reassured them for the fifth time and they looked at him in disbelief as he showed them inside and gave them their rooms.

They immediately got greeted by the current kids already living there, who began chatting with them and exchanging names.

Eren wondered why no fights had broken out. Perhaps it was the guards who would patrol around and were sometimes just left him by Historia when she sneaked off, or simply that the kids were all from similar backgrounds.

Most had come from the underground but now, more and more were brought from other parts of
So there are kids living on the streets even in the interior…' The Titan shifter thought of how lavish and safe Wall Sina was always portrayed. While it certainly was better in the interior, the same problems existed here, more hidden behind the scenes and old buildings.

Waving off the new kids who seemed comfy and overjoyed, some of whom would rush in and hug his leg a little or show him something they found interesting.

An elder boy rushed up to him just as he was about to leave, followed by a small band of a similar age, all of them about 8 to 10. There were some kids who were 12 or more, though by the state age, most had already either enlisted in the military or been sent to fieldwork by the old government. "Hey, you're Eren Jaeger the Hero right?!"

"Uh… I'm… Eren, yeah," he said slowly, rubbing his neck as he hid his frown and pained heart at how the eyes of the girls and boys lit up like his did once.

"Did you really save the people of Orvud district from a Titan twice as tall as the wall?!" A girl, holding a doll to her chest asked.

"I heard you sealed the gate at Trost as well!" A blonde boy exclaimed.

"Aren't you the first person to ever win back territory against the Titan?!!" Another one who was surprisingly tall for his age asked.

The swarm of questions kept building.

And then…

"You seem to be popular already," the blonde Queen stepped around from the corner, holding a now empty washing bag.

"Big sister Historia!" They all chanted like a chorus as they rushed to her altogether instead, showing who the favorite person around here was.

One girl, holding the doll held it up to her, "look big sis! I fixed the hat on her after you gave her to me!"

Historia smiled back at them as they rushed to greet her and she patted her head and the rest of theirs in turn, Eren happy that she had got their attention momentarily.

About to leave, Eren looked down after he felt someone tug his sleeve.

A little boy, who appeared rather composed as though he had lost a lot in his past but still held onto a curiosity in his eyes.

Eren gulped as someone had to catch the attention of the group again.

"Hey, what's your relationship with the Queen?"

…

"… Eh?!" Historia was staring at them immediately when she heard and Eren froze when they made eye contact.

The group of 3 kids who had rushed to Historia looked back and forth between them.
"Are you married yet?" the first boy who had approached him asked them both.

"Big sis, is he really your husband?!" the tall boy, still not much more than half Historia's height, asked.

"WHAT, NO!" Historia practically screamed at them, beet red in the face as she slowed down and wobbled her tongue. She glanced at Eren and froze. Eren realised he was blushing himself as he watched his blonde friend turn scarlet. "We are not in a relationship like that!"

"Hehehe. Big sis and the Titan knight, sitting in a tree, K – I – S – S – I - " The kids laughed at them and scattered soon afterwards as they're chant got interrupted.

"WHO TAUGHT YOU THAT RIDICULOUS CHANT?!" Historia ground her feet in as the kids laughed at her and suddenly began rushing back inside. "It was one of the Survey Corps soldiers wasn't it?! Urgh, it was Jean wasn't it, grr..."

Eren coughed a little uncomfortably.

"Ah, big sis is mad!" The kids shouted inside as they all hid and had suddenly started a game of hide and seek.

"Hmph," Historia snorted as they all run off to places around the farm, one of the boys yelling " - I – N G!" as he rushed away.

She heard a snicker from next to her and hit Eren with a backhand on his arm.

"Ow..." Eren moaned as they had suddenly become the seekers, the kids suggesting they work together to find them.

...

3 hours later as they wandered about the fields together constantly, they still hadn't found half of the 40 or so that they said were joining in.

"Ugh, little demons..." the blonde Queen sighed.

"You get on well with kids," the Titan shifter didn't miss the content smile as they walked up a hill together.

For a moment, the blonde girl next to him flickered, replaced by a memory of his mother.

"Whatever," Historia waved her hand, gently brushing his longcoat with more than a little exhaustion, "cheeky devils..."

"Thanks for encouraging them to let me take the time off with you," Eren expressed his gratitude as he grabbed her hand and pulled her up the last bit onto the hilltop.

"Why? You wanted to spend time with me that much?" She managed to smirk softly back at him.

"Well... yeah."

Historia flushed again, turning away and not facing him for a little while. Her blonde hair danced in the wind a little.

"So, you told them about me?" Eren changed the topic.
"Uh, yeah a little…" the blonde turned to look back at him, "I've not told them your deepest secrets or anything like that, don't worry."

"Deepest secrets huh…" He considered how much Historia knew of him, the memories of his childhood from the day he lost his first fight to the day that he lost without a chance to fight.

"But well… we've suffered a lot because of that…" Historia continued.

"The truth you mean?" Eren verified.

Historia nodded, "because of the information and what little we know has been kept from us, you… we ended up all suffering like this…"

"Beyond the wall… there are certainly enemies to fight, right?" The blonde was looking ahead to somewhere, "if someday… we learn our true history… then I'm certain we'll have gone the right way. It should be something for us all to know."

They leaned together up against the fence as they approached back to the orphanage building, feeling the wind pick up, whispering known secrets.

Eren looked across the grasslands of cold breezes.

He looked at the world now.

…

Breathing in the chilly air, his hand managed to find the petite fingers of the girl next to him.

"Yeah… we've both been deceived and lied to…" He remembered the similar words she spoke before.

Turning down the First King's power.

Refusing to eat him.

Freeing him from his chains.

He didn't regret it either anymore.

Holding her hand firmly, he felt influenced by her will.

'Well… even without that… I've accepted this myself…' He had decided somewhere along the past couple months.

They were struggling against their enemies because they lacked the knowledge about their enemy.

If they could uncover the truth then the tide would change further.

The effects could multiply and spread from here at Historia's direction.

Memories that only a true Founding Titan could know.

Their locked hands hadn't provided answers.

As though something was blocking them from it.

The only thing he had…
Was that strange sight of things that couldn't have happened…

Shinganshina… he had certainly seen it.

He was there in his Titan form…

Fighting against the person he hated the most.

Eren had seen it. The Armoured Titan defeated in front of him in Shinganshina.

Such a thing and the image that followed after could not have happened yet…

The brunet reassured himself that it was just a dream.

A dream of what he truly needed to do.

He had tried kissing Historia's hand again, straight after that to find nothing.

The Founding Titan wouldn't work for someone like him… right here, only Historia could have used it.

He had given Historia the choice over his life.

She had made her choice.

She gave him back the choice to what to do with his life.

"Yeah, when we find out what happened, we won't lie to anyone else."

He made his choice.

And gave her another promise to be broken.

---

**Night before the Operation to Reclaim Wall Maria – Survey Corps Base**

"Meat...?" Connie blinked, "is this… meat?"

Slices of cooked, fresh steak with a pronounced sauce coating it was laid in plates on each table in front of the new recruits and veterans that had finished bringing them around.

"Ah… can't… believe it…"

And in front of Sasha, lay a large platter of a meat mountain. Her table stood especially as people noticed and smelt it in the air. Beef ribs stacked up high, lamb and mutton circling all around the massive platter. Steaks and sausages, all still warm. Duck and chicken breasts further down the table and a massive boar all cooked, just as big as the one she had once caught for her competition against Jean.

It was like something outside of royalty, which only the highest Queen could be able to eat if she demanded it.

Carefully sauced in every slice, every surface spiced or herbed. Hard cooked brown, fresh and sizzled red and cleaned white. All the colours ranging within of all the various assortments of meats in all shapes, carved with expert knives and kitchen equipment.
The table cloths were laid and the seat even had a note on it that said 'For Sasha Blouse Only' in case it wasn't already obvious.

"Here's to recapturing Wall Maria. Cheers!" The messy haired section commander opened his eyes to how the rabble broke out into dealings, nobody registering his words. "Huh?! Hey..."

The dinner room had broken out into numerous large fights and arguments over the meat as some of the officers tried calming everyone down.

Before long, they realised that struggling was pointless and returned to their own meals as they watched.

One brunette huntress was positively devouring tables by the sets. 10 plates then 20. All the food at the table was being steadily devoured. And also took a bite of Jean's meat while still not satisfied.

"Hey… looks like we have some casualties." One of the leaders at the table of the section commanders noted.

"Whose bright idea was it to give them meat again?" Hanji inquired heatedly.

"Sorry… thing is, I didn't even have to spend the two months' worth of food budget I was planning on tonight."

"Hm?" Hanji glanced over while chewing the succulent meal she couldn't deny to have missed a little, "what do you mean by that?"

"Came all in the morning, the Reeves guys didn't even need the payment," he explained while picking up another slice with his fork, "said it all came from the capital. They've been paid from the government's pocket apparently."

Elsewhere, Eren gave a sigh of relief and Sasha struggles ended. "She seems okay now."

"She finally tired herself out," Connie looked almost in disbelief after Eren had come to rescue and pulled her off his arms. "Hard to believe that she was going to split that meat with us..."

Eren blinked. He was about to ask when but then he recalled it all.

4 months ago. The day before their expected graduation day. They had been cleaning the walls without worry.

He recalled that Sasha had indeed promised to share the small bit of meet she had stolen with them if they all kept it a secret. One by one they promised, before returning to work.

Eren recalled himself, smiling as he looked at the southern sky.

And then it all changed.

In an instant once again.

The eyes looking at him that now he could see the resemblance of.

He appeared out of nowhere and broke another barrier between their worlds.

'… He disappeared...' Eren's anchors had had dropped as though it was all but a dream.

The place he had to have been moments ago, yet his blades slice through empty air.
He had spent 3 years next to them.
Sharing the same dormitories, eating at the table together and training all day.
The source of it all.
They had been right there, next to him, all this time.

"What... were you thinking that day?"

"Back then... I felt very sorry for you..."

He could see it.
Eren realised it now.
Bertholdt. As he escaped in the steam on that day at Trost, blinding him.
The deep shifter marks ingrained into his cheeks, searing flesh off under the weight of the Colossal Titan's power.
He had never seen Bertholdt's shifter marks once before.
Yet... this wasn't his imagination.
The tall shifter, biting back panic and grief, swiftly sneaking from the side of the wall, hood desperately trying to cover his face.
Sweating from heat, exhaustion and sadness, Eren could see the destroyer of the walls nodding to... Eren himself, signaling that he had accomplished his task just as the shifter marks already began to heal the dug up cheek bones.
Was this another memory that had snuck into his consciousness during his time with Historia?
But...
These were neither his, nor Historia's nor the memories of anyone from the past. At that time, he was already, unknowingly holding the great power inside of him.
The one who would be awaiting for Bertholdt's return was –
"Hey," a hand patting on his shoulder woke him up again. Connie's hand, observing him concernedly.
"!" His body jolted in alarm as he found himself in the noisy room again, shouts and complaints roaring the entire hall.
"So it's only been..." Eren backtracked to what the bald headed soldier had said earlier, "...four months since then..."
"Only four months," Connie affirmed, grinning smugly, "and in only four months, we made it into Squad Levi. How's that for climbing the ladder?"

Eren smiled back and rubbed his bald head, "it's cause you're a genius!"

"Of course!" Connie motioned himself and jabbed the Titan shifter gently in the ribs before they returned to the table.

"Mmf…?!" Sasha tried to call out for help for the remainder of the night, "MMF?!"

---

**Dawn of the Operation to Reclaim Wall Maria – Trost District**

The leaders of the Survey Corps were all in the floor above with all the other Garrison, Military Police and central military, saying their final farewells.

The steam powered lift was behind him and Armin and Mikasa were waiting for him after all the former 104th cadets had spoken with the Queen who had arrived specially for them.

Formalities and other exchanges had already been done. Historia had spoken, addressing them all as instructed.

Eren had stayed behind until last while everyone else dispersed, saying he'd only be a moment as everyone said fleeting goodbyes.

Staring at the blonde who smiled at him confidently in her semi-regal wear, he couldn't help but think how she looked better back at the orphanage which he spent several days with her after the commander had allowed him to spend the final week to recuperate. "Well? Are you going to say how much you'll miss me?"

"Yeah, that's part of it," Eren smirked knowingly. She wasn't a member of the Survey Corps anymore.

He sighed a little, hearing the Trost bell ring as the call was being made for all Survey Corps to head to the wall.

"Historia… if… I find… Ymir…" Eren brought it up, eyes still wavering with uncertainty, "and if… the circumstances allow it… I'll bring her back as well… I promise that I'll try…"

She gaped a little, hearing her name being brought up now of all times.

"Yeah… to see Ymir again… I think…" she hesitated, unprepared for the topic, despite the frequency which she considered it as of late as the time approached.

…

She had called her a traitor.

Did she truly mean that completely?

"I think…" she resolved herself. Her feelings and Ymir's intentions conflicting. She had left for her own reasons in the end. "… You… should…"

…

"Yeah, I know. I'm prepared to face her as an enemy if that's the case… but I promise if I ca– "
Eren tried to argue, hoping something.

All for her sake.

"Yeah... I know... don't let them take advantage of you with that... but... if you can... then please... I think... I would like to see her again..." The words left her easily now.

She knew she could be open with her true feelings to Eren.

Historia doubted things with Ymir could ever be the same.

But...

She wondered what it would be like if she saw her now.

Would she get along with her as Historia?

Or would she tell a different lie and shy away from what she really wanted to say again?

Either way, no matter how it was, she couldn't deny the feeling in her.

"That's good enough," Eren nodded. "I promise, if I do meet her, I'll try and convince her. But well... If we do manage to bring her back, just don't expect her to be unscraped after I have a talk with her,"

Historia smiled softly. "... Don't go too hard on her if it comes to that..."

The Titan shifter made no promises about that.

She sighed a little more happy as the dawn rose and she squinted her eyes when the rays hit her through the window.

...

Eren still hadn't moved.

He should have been up on the wall already.

...

"I believe in you."

...

That was all she said.

Taking a step forward, Eren watched her as she slowly wrapped her arms around him in the silent rays of the morning.

Her head brushed into his chest as he smiled down on her softly and hugged her back.

They stayed like that, transmitting heat to each other for a few minutes.

...

Until the calls and shouts could be heard of late preparations.
"Go. I've kept you waiting long enough…" the Queen nodded her head down the hallway.

...

She pulled away after he didn't make a move to and slowly backed away, staring at him as he looked back.

Smiling at him, she gave a little wave before turning around and hiding her face.

"Historia, wait!" He instantly called for her a little too loudly for the distance.

"I'm going to get you in trouble at this rate," she rolled her eyes slightly, unable to take a step away from him after he called out to her.

She heard his footsteps walking up to her and his hands on her shoulders, turning her around while she maintained eye contact.

Eren sighed again, moving his hand to brush her eyes, that were clean and without a trace of tears that she herself had expected to reveal.

"I promised I'd return," he reassured her again, brushing softly over the rubbed red lines.

Historia nodded sighing again. "Yeah… I already know you will."

This time.

She had neglected to mention the last part.

He didn't need to hear it.

"You're still wavering aren't you…" she spoke knowingly.

His will had recovered a lot since then.

But still, there remained something not belonging of him.

"I believe in you."

She said the words again.

Eren returned the smile and they suddenly heard people shouting Eren's name.

They hugged once more and then parted.

Turning down their separate routes they didn't thrown each other any last glances as they felt the others presence start to move away.

"See you later…"

– "Historia."

– "Eren."

So… hopefully that fills in some blanks and sorts out the flashbacks to the trainee expedition that got far, far too long! That was all meant to originally wrapped up by chapter 4 or at the
latest 5 and here we are now at chapter 11! But yeah, had to cut down on some Keith there unfortunately and decided to move Mikasa flashback up a little to next chapter but there at least Mikasa's character can be sorted nicely... I hope!

Ending Scene: WARNING MANGA SPOILERS - CONTAINS SPOILERS FOR SEASON 4 (OR WHAT WILL BE SEASON 4 AT LEAST)

"Are... you sure asking a girl out like that would really work Mr Kruger?" the blond boy asked shyly.

"... Positive," the wounded soldier revealed nothing.

Falco chucked at that, "really?"

"Maybe not... completely positive," the wounded soldier managed to smirk a bit for once, staring at the card he was holding.

He had written it up himself and suggested the best way for Falco to confess his feelings was by holding a card to his chest and giving a sweet smile that the wounded soldier had auditioned Falco for.

Written on it, it said 'I have just lost my voice and I think you may have stolen it, could you give it back with an answer? I wanted to tell you something important so I wrote it down: .... I love you, please go out with me.'

The wounded soldier slowly lift his arm and gave him a thumbs up that all was perfect.

"... You didn't really try telling the one you wanted to be with this away did you?" the blond boy smiled down knowingly.

"... Maybe not like this," the soldier conceded as the younger boy fell into a fit of chuckles.

He wondered how Gabi actually would react if he came outright like this. At least this way, he couldn't mess up his words and shy away again.

Falco laughed for a little while longer, like he hadn't in a long time until he calmed down and thanked the elder man.

He decided he probably wouldn't use it but it had given him a strange courage. That was probably all that was meant by this suggestion from the elder man.

"Alright..." Falco nodded happily, "but, after the festival... I'll tell her properly how I feel..."

The wounded soldier nodded positively. His hand felt down his neck to the leather pouch that still held the sunstone. Moving his fingers past it, he pulled out the circular object.

"Are you... going to ask her as well Mr Kruger?" Falco asked, seeing the gentle glint of it of a strange colour.

"Yeah... you'll ask your talented girl friend out and I'll ask mine," the wounded soldier nodded, pocketing the ring back.

"It's a promise then?" The young boy asked happily, "after the festival, we'll both do it."
"Yeah… it's a promise," the one legged man answered, making the little vow.

When he returned home, he would ask her again.

He would confess it all.

And then ask her to do it again.
This chapter basically covers most of the RtS arc/battle since yeah the results remain the same as in canon, and yeah kinda a drag of a chapter lol, simply since… a hella of a lot of it can be skipped lol, though that applies for pretty much any chapter haha but hopefully now that it's done at last, things can move on… hopefully haha.

But yeah, this is effectively meant to cover chapter 72 – 86 effectively so yeah after this, Eren and the Survey Corps will return to the wall already which yeah probably will make this chapter feel rushed no matter how it's sliced haha. Though yeah that's the way I'm gonna leave it at since well trying the other end of the stick compared to earlier with Uprising arc but hopefully this may look better in connected once the next chapter is added on after this but yeah!

Discord invite: discord.gg/BnGuCwU (delete the space right after the "discord", no need for the triple 'w' – also there are 4 now lol, but its there if you want it!)

"speech"

'thoughts' - Italics

Chapter 12 - Nach Etwas Begehren

, ~2001

? 

The apple was in her hand as she gazed curiously at it, remembering an old tale in her ancient book.

"Hey!" The boy suddenly reached over her and grabbed it from her hand.

The girl blinked at him and huffing in annoyance, seeing him begin eating it already since he had tried to climb up for it after all.

"Fine then," the girl ignored her constant empty stomach. Her friend was probably even more hungry than her.

Both their villages were poor and always lacking in harvest. She wondered if her father would have any luck hunting today, though she doubted so when game was scarce and her father was average at best in catching deer.

Her friend was similar, and his village was even weaker. They worried sometimes given the rivalry of their families.
"… I didn't say you couldn't have any," the boy was holding it out for her when she turned, not looking at her.

She thanked him and took the roughly half eaten apple. Putting down strange thoughts, she ignored that her friend had been eating the juicy red orb prior to her and began wolfing it down as well.

"Huh…" Her friend spoke up as she continued to eat quickly, "isn't this like that one story you read to me…?"

"Yup!" The girl nodded happily that he had remembered. "About the Devil, the swan girl and the boy who could speak with the wind."

The boy nodded, recalling it, "... That swan girl, why didn't she resist the Devil when he tried to make her eat that forbidden fruit... she was blessed and protected by the swan, she was stronger than him... why didn't she resist..."

She went quiet while listening, finding difficulty in answering back. "... Do you think she should have fought back...?"

The boy shrugged his shoulders, glancing back at the apple seeds that he had managed to catch before they were lost in the grass.

"... Well... if she really couldn't fight back because she lacked the will or something..." the boy bit into the seeds, crushing them between his teeth, "... why couldn't she just... run away..."

The girl smiled softly and turned to look at the boy, "I thought you didn't like people who try to run away? Didn't you say you found that cowardly?"

The boy scoffed, standing up of the ground suddenly, "whatever, isn't it about time for you?"

The girl blinked, fixated sadly at the lack of answer from him as he brushed himself off to little avail.

"Alright," the girl accepted, knowing her father was mad with her often for being late with the ever growing tension in the village, "... see you later, ."

The boy said the same in a half-hearted manner. She sighed as she glanced back, beginning her steps down her hill carefully, the distance between them increasing fast from the downwards trek.

"We'll meet again in a week's time right here again right?!" The boy called after her, suddenly a long way away by the tree.

"Yeah, so long as you keep your promise!" The girl smiled, perhaps for the last time for a long while.

"Of course I will, you better keep yours!"

The boys words traveled across the wind to her as though the wind itself brought the message to her as she faced, running towards her village.

She never saw him again.

---

**Day Before the Battle of Shinganshina – Wall Maria**
Sitting cuddled up with a blanket over him, the blond Titan shifter stared up northwards, towards Trost, the direction the Survey Corps would most likely come from.

It was silent.

2 months had passed and there was still no sign of Paradis's soldiers coming to scout nor any sound of horses galloping.

There was no need for him to stay on alert when they had another of their warrior's hidden in the mountain's forest that had a far better vantage point.

However, from the few times they've gone as far as they've could, they had seen something being built outside of Trost district and an increased frequency of soldiers, particularly in the past week.

If they were to attack, chances are it would be at night. Assuming they may have figured things out further, their warchief had reminded them of the new moon tonight.

But somehow, he felt that tomorrow, everything would be decided.

Stretching himself, he got up on his feet and went to the tent pitched up behind him and opened the cover.

Inside, Bertholdt was resting after being on watch last night, curled up into a ball, resembling of a foetus almost.

He sighed, throwing the blanket over his friend before taking an empty cup of coffee before going outside to where the hot water was boiling.

After pouring himself a cup and leaving it aside too cool, he sat down at the same spot again, folding his legs and readjusting the blanket over him.

The wind was stronger on top of the wall, just as another frequent cold gust swept in and almost spilt the cup on it's side before he pressed one hand down over it, stopping it from toppling.

The warm light metal container faintly burnt his fingers, not that it bothered him enough as he waited for the wind to die down again.

Once it had, he slowly brought the drink to his mouth before another gust swept in and caused some of the hot beverage to splash out and land on his trousers.

Sighing softly, the blond took a thin gulp of it down his throat, as he continued thinking in the silence now broken by the wind howling at him in spite.

By this point, he wouldn't blame the elements themselves for reserving personal hatred for him.

6 more years left to live...

All assuming he didn't fall in battle or give up his power to the next warrior in line by the time he returned home.

In that time, he had to win here, recover the Coordinate and complete their mission, then return to the walls with Bertholdt to save Annie and return home again.

That was all that mattered right now.

"Hoi. Reiner." He heard a man walking towards him from across the wall steadily, adjusting his
glasses as he looked across the horizon as well. "Get some rest. There's no point in trying to sneak into the walls now."

The Armoured Titan hardened his gaze a little, thinking of the promise before their attack 5 years ago by the tree on top of the hill.

Their enemies would be arriving here soon and they had already made the preparations for the plan already. And there was no way for him to beat Zeke and change his decision.

"I'll be fine," he replied, consigning himself to his superior's plan and the consequences of it. In some ways he felt relieved, now that a suitable leader has come. He had been unable to achieve anything besides taking losses with too little gained. "… But if we did sneak inside the wall, we could recover both Annie and Eren, then –"

The Beast Titan shook his head and sighed, turning back round and leaving him, as though telling him to take some more time to reassess his thoughts.

Reiner frowned at his back, seeing him descend by the rope back into Shinganshina which he had been exploring over the past few days.

Ever since they had told him of Eren Jaeger, their warrior leader had become acting strange.

'Eren...' Reiner thought back to when his worst fears came to pass, 'of all people, it had to be you with that power...'

He felt like the wall he sat on trembled ominously, foretelling the future. For all he'd know, the walls could move and crumble at any moment now.

If there was a way to stop such a thing…

2

The moment in which he kissed the Queen's hand, Eren saw the flurry of cuts.

Within them all, he realised he was looking through someone's eyes, then perhaps someone else's.

That scenery remained in his mind at the very end, along with hidden encounters in the shadows that repeated again and again.

He would always see the arms, his arms, moving back the hood of the jacket he kept to hide himself and face the sole person who would always meet him without fail.

"We... can't tell anyone about this."

The tone of voice was unfamiliar to him and so he struggled to think it was his own.

"I know." The woman in front of him reassured him as always.

He could see the young blonde girl's face clearly.

Her hair was too long. Eren wondered if the familiar woman had cut it in the past, otherwise he could not think of anything else that was probable.

Their relationship had to be hidden.
If it wasn't, it would all be over.

Their hands touched again as the proximity of the lips closed without hesitation.

*His vision went blank before the end, and the "memory" changed again.*

"You can't tell anybody about what you've seen."

Eren somehow new they were directed at him.

*It was the voice of whomever he was seeing the vision through.*

Whoever it was, Eren knew that person was aware he was seeing this.

"Not Armin, not Mikasa, nor anybody else."

He couldn't nod in reply nor do anything as the memories repeated and changed and repeated.

Each time he would pull her hand into an alleyway or pull his behind a hurriedly closed door.

"Hey! Hurry up or we'll be found out!"

Eren couldn't tell anyone about this.

The now long long haired blonde woman called for him as they rushed back to the orphanage in a blink of lightning.

"It'll work out right?"

"Yeah, it's cause we managed to keep it a secret all this time that it'll work."

*Neither the contents of these "memories" or that he had seen them at all.*

The man and woman exchanged silent words in the blossoming woods again.

"Eren... since you'll have see this, you don't have to keep it to yourself, I'll always be your ally."

The woman stared at him straight through the eyes he looked through, smiling familiarly at him as though she wanted to say more but was holding back her feelings for another time.

*He tried to keep the face of the woman who had spoken last in mind as the gale of visions cut off.*

And Eren had opened his eyes, his lips parted from the Queen's hand as he looked up at Historia.

---

**Late Fall of the Year 850 – On Top of Wall Rose Above the Sealed Gate of Trost**

The rhythm of the falling guillotine hammered down on the Titans that had gathered at the southern border, drawn in by the increased number of people gathered on the wall.

Armin stood nearby her, fidgeting slightly as he tried to calm himself. She considered leaning over to him and holding his shoulder to reassure him, but both her hands held onto the horse reins she held in either hand.

One horse was hers, and the other belonged to Eren who was late again.

The raven haired girl's hair fluttered past her eyes without her bothering to sweep them aside from
her eyes,

"Mikasa…" Armin called her to attention as he nodded reassuringly. She noticed his hand still trembling. "You don't have to worry, Eren will be here."

The Ackerman nodded and turned back, scanning across the elevators that all the soldiers were using, still no sign of Eren.

She had often been called out on her obsession over the now 'Hope of Humanity' as she heard him being called.

Mikasa however didn't see anything wrong with it.

Eren was her only family.

But he wasn't the only one that mattered to her.

"Will you be alright?" She turned to Armin, stuttering up and looking across the horizon to their intended destination.

She always though he appeared rather fragile despite knowing the strength he held. The blond was the one who everyone saw as Eren's best friend. She couldn't deny sometimes feeling the bond between the two childhood friends. But Armin was her childhood friend as well.

"… Yeah," he inclined his head at her direction and they shared a knowing look. "We're… actually about to go back home."

She only lived there for a year, but it was just as much of her home and her family's home.

"..." Mikasa heard Sasha yell something a little further away and Jean yelled back and slapped Connie on the back of his head.

Only Armin was nearby her right now, as they sat on top of the wall in the somewhat familiar setting.

' "Why is it… that Eren… always gets so far from us?" '

The times they spent back together, when she had lost her home and been given a new one in the same night.

' "… Eren has always been like that... running off on his own, and leaving us behind."

If it had been her in the past, she wondered if she'd have gone off to find him by now.

He wasn't taken by the enemy or gone chasing after someone else this time however.

She frowned however, wondering what he actually was doing right now.

But she didn't move from her post without permission anymore.

When she waited, and took a step back, it seemed for one reason or another, Eren had become more open to her now.

For what it was worth, she didn't want to change that right now.

He was accepting to her and not pushing her away…
"Whether it's of his own will or not... He always does it."

But he still seemed to leave her behind with no warning.

The time they spend seemed to have decreased lately. He had come out and apologized it to her recently.

But even so, he kept disappearing every other day when possible... first the royal capital, now increasingly more often the new Sina orphanage.

"All I want... is to be close to him. That's all... but..."

She felt the wish to remain close to her only family.

Her head throbbed and an ache flowed through it.

She wasn't going to lose her family again.

She wasn't going to see the only left for her disappearing again.

She wasn't going to let anyone take Eren again.

Yet she struggled now to follow after him whenever he left without reply.

"I guess that's his destiny."

For now at least, there was no reason to worry as Eren would arrive for the expedition which couldn't begin without him.

"...What will Eren do after that?" Mikasa thought back to the book she never understood that Armin showed them. 'He might leave us behind again to go somewhere far away.'

A gentle nonexistent flutter caught her eye that she turned to, wandering if it was the rays of a rainbow somewhere or a mirror reflecting the light from somewhere.

'But... I won't have the power to stop him.'

Mikasa's hand softened before she clenched it again.

She had never been able to stop him.

Nor change the outcome despite all her strength and power before it was too late.

The distant sounds of a butterfly's mirrored wings beating called back her somber thoughts of how things could have been different.

"Oh... That's right..."

"I was just a bystander..."
I wasn't able to change anything.

... It was a vague memory.

Eren's back was to her, going on ahead through the forest around her old home while she had lived with her parents.

It didn't make sense.

Eren had never once taken her into that forest around her home, they hadn't been able to meet as children in such circumstances.

The forest.

The green leaves felt like a reflection of the colour of the boy's fierce emerald eyes.

It had stopped raining outside and so Eren had suggested to go exploring.

"...!" Mikasa called after him, "Hey... how far are we going to go?"

"Huh?" The brunet turned around to her while waving the stick he had picked up like he was lazily holding a sword.

"We shouldn't go too far," the black haired girl tried to warn him.

"Why not?" The green eyed boy stared at her without dishonest feelings.

"My dad said... not to go too deep into the forest..." Mikasa answered.

"Yeah, but why not?"

"... He said... there are a lot of dangerous animals in the forest... like bugs, and snakes and stray dogs..." the girl continued trying to convince him to turn back, "also, if we go too far... we might get lost and won't be able to find our way back."

The footsteps ahead of her didn't stop, pulling another stride away from her.

"So what?" The voice said without fear nor concern.

Or rather it sounded like it was captivated by something else... something greater that she could not see nor understand...

"... S... S-So... um..." Mikasa's lips wobbled as she tried to call out as he continued. Looking down at her feet, she summoned all her courage to speak to him, "... I'm... going back..."

Her ears tuned in for a response.

When she received now she looked up, fearing to find herself all alone, Eren disappeared from her sights.

She blinked and realised he was still there, his feet now stopped in his tracks as he looked back at her.

...
"Hey," he called to her, "you dad hunts. And your mom grows vegetables, cleans, does the laundry, cooks meals, and takes care of you, right?"

"Y… Yeah..." She wondered why her voice was trembling so much.

She was just talking to Eren.

"So, what are you going to do?"

Her body froze and her trembling stopped for a moment.

"Me…?" She blinked her grey eyes at the question she'd never thought about. "I'm… I…. don't know..."

Eren sighed at her.

"So are you going to spend the rest of your life… not knowing what you're going to do… following your dad's instructions, and never seeing anything but your home and the entrance of the forest?"

His green eyes burnt and matched to the greenery all around them, as he pointed the stick upwards behind him and to the gap through the trees

"Without ever learning… what's inside the forest?"

His eyes were fierce but not hateful.

They told her how the boy didn't understand.

That he could see the world completely differently from her.

"…" Mikasa replied when a bit of her confidence returned, "…is that a bad thing?"

"No, it's not. It's not a bad thing, but…" Eren looked at her differently now, boring holes through her, "a life like that… is no different from the life of a chicken."

"A chicken?" She piqued her head slightly.

A flightless bird.

"Yeah," he waved the stick in a circle and the general direction back home which he had not lost nor forgotten, "you raise chickens at home, right?"

The black haired girl nodded.

The little wooden pen that kept them inside at the corner of the house.

"They never know what's going to happen to them, and they never know what's happening in the outside world."

"They live their entire lives in that cramped coop…"

"Thinking that's their entire world."

"They never question a thing."

"They just eat, sleep… get fed more food…"
"And then one day… they're suddenly eaten by you."

She had seen her father do it once when an odd occurrence happened. The headless chicken, was still somehow struggling for breath.

It was dead. It should surely be dead.

But it's legs kept kicking. It's wings kept struggling while blood was chortled out from where they had been decapitated.

The head fell onto the ground, staring right at her.

She looked away. Just like always.

Turning away from the truth of the world.

"You're the same as those chickens."

Like a farm animal.

Unable to fly or even think of going beyond the cage.

Like a sheep following the shepherd.

Like a pig waiting for slaughter.

Like a dog going to the whistle of the master.

"You live your entire life in ignorance… and you'll still be ignorant… the day you're killed."

Her whole body shivered over, the thought of what it would be like with her head rolling in her mind. ‘… Killed…?’

..."If you leave now… you'll never learn what's inside the forest." The green eyed boy pointed into the trees again to a faraway place inside them, "are you fine with that?"

Her cheeks burned from her hands rubbing away the water droplets that wouldn't stop.

She hid her face as she tried to hide herself from embarrassment.

Mikasa cried.

She kept crying, not knowing what to do, not knowing what she wanted to do.

Eren rushed to her after seeing that and quickly offered her a tissue.

Taking it with gratitude, she listened to his words slowly.

"I'm going to keep exploring," she heard the boy as she looked at him through her blurry eyes, "what are you going to do?"

She watched him go in.
His back was too her again and suddenly so far away as she walked after him.

Her grey eyes still stung as she continued onwards after her had calmed her down.

'It's strange…'

She walked on, following him into the forest that seemed a lot smaller just as he said.

'… I was so afraid earlier… but once Eren spoke to me… I stopped being scared.'

'I don't need to be terrified.'

'All these trees and leaves are nothing more than trees and leaves.'

'They're not scary.'

'This forest… is way smaller than I think it is.'

It was more like a woods than a forest.

…

There was something there.

The howling of a wild animal.

It was loud.

She had heard stories about the animals that lived in the forest from when her father was hunting.

The most dangerous encounter had been…

'A bear…?'

The guardian of the forest.

Fear crawled up through her.

There was another thing that he father warned her of.

Something equally dangerous as the angered king of animals.

Wolves.

They would always travel in a pack.

Her father had once been able to kill one. But it had been replaced with three more and he had to run for his life again.

The howl rang out again.

A pack of wolves or a bear?

She knew she had to get away as soon as possible.

But… she couldn't move a step.
She wasn't trembling in fear.

**Something…** was urging her in that direction… As if saying…

"Let's go," Eren said, pulling her hand.

**You must go there.**

And… **you must witness what is happening there.**

Within the forest.

She went in, following the boy.

It was a pack of wolves.

Devouring the men.

For some reason, she could tell they were kidnappers.

"What's… going to kill me…?"

"Huh? What's that mean?" Eren jumped a little while watching the corpses as the wolves left them.

"You just said that I'd be killed, Eren… that I'd be ignorant until the day I'm killed…"

"What's… going to kill me…?"

The emerald eyes pierced her before turning back to the slaughtered and unfinished men.

"**A great power.**"

"A great power is going to kill you."

After that day, they never went into the forest again.

She was allowed to travel down to Shinganshina one day at last.

Since Eren had stopped coming to her house, she was instead invited to his.

Wishing to see the city for herself and what it was like.

How different their lives would be compared to hers.

To see the Survey Corps, the ones who Eren wished to join.

And so she watched as Eren had been beaten before her.

After he stood up for those mocking the Survey Corps, he had been beaten half to death.

And she could only watch.

Trying to pick up a broken glass bottle, she was reminded of the way by the old man closely whispering into her ear.
This is what happened when someone tried to rebel against order.

The concept soaked into her mind.

…

The boat trip back to her home in the mountainous went by quietly.

She had to go home once it was clear Eren needed to remain in bed to recover.

"Eren… always seemed like he was mad at something." Eren's father spoke while accompanying her home.

The wooden boat continued traveling by the lines it gripped on the rail above as it worked it's way up the slightly sloping mountain.

"That rage of his… is going to take him to a very dangerous place before he even realizes it."

"So, that's why I decided to take Eren to the mountains where you live,"

"If he can live with you, surrounded by nature, something might change inside of him for the better."

She remembered the way he always acted around her.

'… *No way,*' the black haired girl thought sadly, *'there's no way it would work...'*

Instead of living inside the safe home with Mikasa.

He had wanted to go into that forest again.

To explore into and past it.

Looking for something.

There was nothing she could change.

Her heart seemed to decide it in an instant.

She couldn't change Eren.

"What happened, might have been… something Eren brought upon himself."

The reason why he would step forward.

The cause of why he was beaten by the world.

"Some… **thing** inside of him… could have drawn him to it, as if it was his **destiny.**"

Grisha continued speaking as they traveled through the water bit by bit.

"Something wicked and dangerous –"

"**A great power.**"

She tried putting something she could neither see nor imagine into words.
"A great power..." Eren's father repeated and nodded gently. "You may be right... some great power that none of us can see... and maybe Eren is so upset because that is what encages him."

The bell sounded in the distance as they approached their destination at the village near the mountains.

"Perhaps you... are the only one able to protect Eren from that great power."

'...? Mikasa blinked at the strange thought. '...M-Me...?'" Perhaps... she could protect him from it...

Per... hap...

But...

To do that she had to make it to his side in time to protect him.

The last bell chimed, signaling that it was already too late.

"How unfortunate. You can't possibly make it there in time now," the mysterious man wearing a mirror mask kept hold of her hand still, continuing to delay her, "you'll never get to meet Eren again."

Cold breath exhaled from her mouth as she shivered in place, trembling to stare at the strange man. His mask was a mirror, completely covered by a surface she could not possibly see through, the voice coming out distorted from beneath and scarcely recognizable.

"Do you know Eren...?" The raven haired girl gasped in between her trembling heart, "who are you...?"

The face of the mirror man showed only her own reflection.

Staring back at her, and refusing to let her go anymore.

"I am nobody, but I could be anybody."

At last, letting go of her hand, he pulled back, the voice hissing a little from beneath the mask. The man pulled his arm back and opened up his cloak.

"And, I know hypnosis really well."

From the mirrored mask to the blades of the daggers lined up there, she saw her trembling eyes in the reflections.

"You are lost."

The mirror man continued speaking as he slipped out one of the many daggers, flipping it around in his hand.

"You arrived here because of your desire."

Grasping her hand once more, he laid the cold hilt of it in her palm then moved for her other, placing it on top so that she held the dagger pointing forwards between both hands.
"It is a world that only exists because of your inability to accept Eren's death."

He stood up from her and wandered a pace beside her, staring at the wall past her before turning back and leaning down to her again.

The girl turned her head to the right as she stared into her own face in the mirror mask again.

"However, no matter what world you go to, you can't avoid Eren's death."

…

"That's because Eren carries death within his body."

…

A body marked by the spectre of death.

"It useless trying to protect him, he'll end up dead anyway."

"If you think it's a lie, go see for yourself."

"However, you have to kill me first."

"You have to become stronger and then return to your original world."

…

The mirror man on which she saw her reflected face continued unmoving in defiance.

"Why… are you trying to stop me…?" Mikasa's voice wobbled, struggling against this world's reality, "I just want… to be with Eren."

She had to cut him down.

' "What choice do we have? The world is a cruel place." '

The memory of the other world flashed by her as she lunged the dagger upwards at the kidnapper.

Before she knew it, a flash of light caught her attention from the wall, upon which the silhouette of the Titan engraved in her memory stared down at her.

A scream rang out as she turned to the mirror man again, now keeling in front of her.

The dagger was plunged into the centre of his forehead, through which the mirror was cracking.

She looked at her red hands and knew that it wasn't fake chicken's blood.

The mirror man's mask crumbled, the little shards breaking her reflecting into tiny pieces fell to the ground as she saw the familiar dark haired face on the other side of the mirror.

"[...]?

"What do you want to do?"

"What's going to happen if you ever meet Reiner and Bertholdt again… ?"
"I… have to kill them…"

"… You want to kill them?"

"I… have to…"

"Do you want to kill them?"

"… I… I have… to…"

"Do you want to kill them?"

"… I…"

---

**Operation to Retake Wall Maria – Mountainous Forest Near Shinganshina**

Gently moving down the mountain slope now, Eren moved carefully with lamp in hand around the group, lighting up the earlier properly while he walked as relaxed as he could be.

Despite the downwards path, each step forward seemed a little harder to complete. He could tell that the night was slowly drawing to a close even without the moon in the dark sky.

One step closer to the home he once escaped from. A time which seemed so very distant now.

They were moving through the forest, the tense atmosphere in the air after they had just spotted a Titan only when they were right next to it.

The Titan shifter could feel the importance of this mission and how everything had been leading up to this.

The final operation to reclaim Wall Maria.

'I'm shaking…' he realised as gentle trembles kept surging around his body like in a circuit. Somehow they were steady almost, moving like the ocean waves in a pattern that he could stiffen his body to prepare for it and not make any odd moves. *If I fail here…*

The company around him all had hoods on, hiding their faces though Eren could tell Captain Levi leading the group with Hanji whispering something to him.

Behind him, he could feel stares on the back of his head and slightly trembling hand, knowing his two childhood friends were watching concerned for him.

'Hah… somehow it's weird that she's not here anymore…' Eren's thoughts changed to the now crowned Queen. He frowned slightly, wondering what it would be like if she had been the one to take the Founding Titan instead. *There's still something wrong for people to put all their hope on me. How am I supposed to save humanity?*

In his head, he knew that with her royal blood, Historia would only be subject to torment and be herself unable to change anything.

Moving his left hand over his chest, he felt the small satchel, attached by string and resting over the key his father had given him years ago now to the basement.

Eren felt the sunstone, still resting around his neck securely as he carried it into the inevitable battle.
Caressing it softly and feeling its shape, as though he was asking for the strength of one who was far away now, separated by soon to be 3 walls.

’… At least she's not the one who would have been burdened in my place.’ He took solace in reminding himself of that, and that if anything it'd be far harder if she was forced to using a power she wouldn't be able to.

The Titan shifter sighed softly, feeling dejected more than scared to his own surprise. He didn't feel burdened like before, trying to escape those who had sacrificed themselves. But –

'What can someone like me do?’ Eren's arm shook a little more as he held it tight. He was prepared to do what needed to be done but to him, it didn't change his incompatibility.

His mind was clear and he knew the scope of his power.

As well as his limits and fallibility.

And that was what he was still scared of.

The blond man above him who he had looked up to flashed his body with complicated feelings.

Somehow or other, Eren knew he was going to fight Reiner.

The strange scene that had flashed by mind when he had kissed Historia's hand passed again.

He knew the ruined houses and area was of Shinganshina, the bright scene in the sky.

The Titan shifter wondered if it was merely just imagination or some other scene from the past.

If they were memories, he couldn't say they were Frieda's, though a particular woman that kept reoccurring in many of them wasn't dissimilar to her in appearance, though he saw the chances of her being an ancestor high.

’… "Eldian"… "from beyond the walls" … "it won't go the way you wish"…’ He repeated the words and images through his head, things he had never seen before,

The strange terms repeated to him, trying to recall any part of their known history that was all but naught.

The bearded man also pictured in his face as his father looked straight up at him.

Switches of battle and unknown people continued as the memories from that moment kept repeating.

'A past Armoured Titan… a past inheritor before Reiner,' Eren was only able to reach that conclusion on his own right now.

He didn't know how appearances would change from one inheritor from another though from Frieda's and his father's memories, the appearance of his Titan wasn't constant, but he had no way of knowing if the same would apply to the Armoured Titan.

If it didn't, that was the best thing he could conclude, otherwise it may just been coincidental. Whomever the memories he saw then, breaking forth like a partially destroyed dam, must have been a past user of the Founding Titan against a past user of the Armoured Titan.

In other words, as far as he was concerned, this information was of no benefit to anyone.
It was fine to hide it.

…

"We… can't tell anyone about this."

Like urging him personally, Eren decided there was no harm in keeping some unhelpful information to himself.

It was of no use for this coming battle nor against Reiner.

Eren remembered the training, now with his hardening power, the battle would go differently than last time.

'I won that time… because of Annie's lessons…' Eren thought back bitterly, only able to gain an edge when he had moved to using her technique. 'It was Reiner too… its because of them that I was able to beat them…'

Strength, mobility and endurance.

Eren had tried to match Reiner on such grounds to his near defeat.

Noticing how his arm was now steady, he clenched it in a first in determination.

He was going to kill him.

…

He was going to fight him.

He was going to fight with Reiner again.

He had to.

He wanted to.

'Reiner.'

He wanted to kill him.

He wanted to forgive him.

He wanted to crush him.

He wanted to talk with him again.

And he wanted to fight with him again.

His last desire was going to take priority.

He was going to fight against Reiner.

He was going to do it.

He was not going to hesitate.

"Are you still shaking a little?" the voice next to Eren surprised him suddenly.
The brunet made eye contact with Armin at his side, peering at him curiously.

"W-What are you saying?!!" Eren jumped from being startled, "I'm not scared!!"

"I didn't say you were..." his blond childhood friend spoke much more calmly than him and glanced down after giving a gentle smile. "You're hands were shaking a lot more earlier... but you've calmed down now."

"Ah..." He tried thinking of a reply before glancing down at Armin's. Despite his calm voice, he could see the clear shaking of his friend's body.

Somehow, he felt surprised he wasn't just as afraid as he was.

"Lately, you've been... detached," Armin suddenly said in a small voice that Eren didn't make out.

"Huh...? Detached...?" The brunet questioned. He considered that he perhaps hadn't been showing his feelings recently after Orvud but it sounded like the comment alluded to something else.

"Sorry, it's nothing. Just, compared to you... I'm so scared I haven't been able to stop shaking though... See..." The blond stared down and did his best to relax his hand that continued trembling over the hand lantern. "Eren, aren't you ever afraid of the Titans?"

The two boys continued marching side by side. The Titan shifter made no response.

"Actually, everyone is normally... me for example, the first time I thought the Titans, I was so scared I couldn't move..." He glanced up at Eren with his light blue eyes, "that was... when you and our comrades were being devoured..."

Eren nodded lightly, remembering the faces of his squad who he was meant to be the leader to.

He could still remember that day clearly.

Lying after his body had hit the roof slabs after his leg was bitten off in the air.

The only left had been Armin, whose cry awakened him again.

"But... Eren, you... saved me from that Titan's mouth..." The blond struggled to put into words how impossible it seemed to him.

...

"Why were you able to do something like that...?"

'I know that Eren will reclaim Wall Maria, wipe out every last Titan, and then get to see the ocean with his own eyes.'

'But even then, I know I know I won't be able to stop his fate.'

'And I won't have... No, nobody will have the power to stop him.'

At the Time of the Battle of Shinganshina – Wall Sina Orphanage

With winter approaching, Historia had made another visit to make sure all the children were provided with the proper insulation. Though it didn't take long for her to go ahead and follow the
kids who dragged her for help.

"Higher! Higher!" One of the young girls yelled happily in the air as she rocked gently back and forth on the swing which Historia pushed her gently on, rolled her eyes and gave her just slightly more momentum.

"Any higher and you'll get hurt if you fall off," she warned her as the girl moaned disattisfied, swinging her legs more to go faster.

The steady cue of about half a dozen of the orphans looked in wonder as they waited patiently to the side so they wouldn't get hit.

"I want my turn now!" One of them pleaded impatiently from the middle of the line.

"Hey! I'm next!" The boy waiting at the start informed him as he switched on and the line slowly advanced with a little pushing involved.

"You're so annoying!" Yet another boy exclaimed as he got squished in between two taller boys.

"Hey if you don't behave, I won't be reading you any stories tonight," the Queen warned them and they slowly reformed the line and backed enough space away after a wail of complaints at her.

Historia sighed and shook her head, reminding herself to find a way for the children to learn how to read and write. The latter was more difficult but she had began teaching some of the older kids the alphabet just as Frieda had once shown her.

The line continued as she helped the young girls and boys in the simple task, reminding them all to hang on tight and to just swing their feet to keep the momentum.

"Hey hey big sis..." one of the boys tugged at the hem of her shoulder cape as he called her.

"Yes? What is it?" she smiled while trying to throw the swing bench over the tree trunk after it had gotten tangled up, hopping on her feet into the air before throwing it through the gap between the branches. 'Dammit... it's so much easier when I have Eren around to do it.'

"Where's Mr Eren?" the boy seemed to read her mind and catch the other children's attention who all faced her now.

"I heard from Mr Pony Man that they went fighting..." another boy seemed worried as he skipped his turn on the swing after she caught it down.

"Huh!? You mean... that's why he's not coming today..." the first girl, who still carried one of the dolls she had given a number of the children, that had gotten off the swing became very sad in contrast to her earlier expression.

"There's no need to worry guys! They are soldiers remember! They're super strong, and Mr Titan is super extra strong!" The boy cheered enthusiastically. "He's the Protector of the Walls!"

The morning breeze spread through the soft meadows from distant lands.

"Yeah," Historia smiled at them all and nodded, patting the girl on her head, "they'll all be fine. Eren will come back here again soon."

'"He might zone out from time to time... but please, trust in him"'

She repeated the words many times to the children in the small world, untouched by the conflict
which she believed her close friend would prevail in.

---

**A Couple Days Ago...**

The idea of a swing seemed simple and an easy way for the kids to have something to entertain themselves with a little.

Finding a tree that hadn't been cut down for agriculture was more difficult when the branches of the small ones were too thin and the tall trees had unreasonable height to suspend robes from when Eren wasn't meant to use his Titan power right now.

"… Damn," Eren sighed as he relaxed on his feet, unable to properly complete the knot, "hold on, let me climb the branch -"

"It'll snap if you're not careful," Historia shook her head, knowing it wouldn't hurt him too much either way.

"Then what do you want me to do?" Eren stood up again and tried to reach up once more. "Let me find a box or something to stand on somewhere..."

The children all chattered impatiently, some of them jumping on the spot with unnecessarily eagerness.

"… Lift me up," Historia suggested and lightly glared up with a sideways glare, telling him not to comment and obey.

"E… Alright…" he compiled. After she stepped forward in front of him, his hand stopped before reaching out to her body. "Ah, um… where should I..."

"Anywhere is fine," Historia answered, slumping backwards a little accidentally as she felt his chest on her back, the bottom of his chin lightly tap on the top of her head.

Eren nodded for a second as the blonde took a step forward again, feeling his hands on her hips.

"Ee-!" she squeaked and blushed suddenly.

"S-Sorry, did I touch a bad place…?" Eren asked wonderingly, his hands simply on her hips, away from any off-limits areas he knew of.

"It's fine..." she denied, feeling his firm hands despite the clothes separating their skin, she could feel the gentle warmth from them.

After hesitating for a moment longer, the Titan shifter lifted up the Queen into the air, suddenly noticing how light she was.

While he tried keeping a firm but not too tight of a grip for it to be uncomfortable, Eren realised a little that her body slipped down through his arms slightly as he lifted her higher, meaning his hands slowly worked up her body.

The brunet looked away for a little, hoping Historia wouldn't notice.

"H-Hey, keep a better grip on me," she told him.

"Shit, sorry," he replied doing so a little tighter, somewhat afraid of how frail her body might be.
"Why is his grip so soft..." the Queen thought as she turned to attention, stretching up her arms and grappling the rope, pulling it up through the loop and tightening it as the children gave a happy cheer.

She thought that four or five knots should be tied at least to be sure, though the rope she had ordered was of a decent make, she had no knowledge of how sturdy it would be when people would be swinging on it.

Her hands moved over, still vaguely aware of Eren's hands, somewhat closer to her chest now and tried to work a little faster.

"Uh, damn." The rope slipped out of her hands as she wobbled a little in the air, despite Eren trying to hold her steady, his arms kept shaking a little and he stumbled a few times accidentally when her dangling feet hit him after she apologized.

She had completed the five knots in one of the ropes before Eren moved her to the side, swinging her in the air somehow that embarrassed her a little, as though he was holding up a little girl to the sky proudly.

The branch deviated upwards here, and so the rope which had been looped over it was slightly higher as she stretched up her hands up, remembering to check that the swing bench was horizontal itself before working at the rope again.

After completed the third knot on it, Historia growled a little, the end of the rope sticking out in the wrong way upwards after a badly tied knot.

"Eren, could you lift me higher," she requested and stretched out her arms and feeling herself lift up as she felt Eren lose his steadiness and her body swaying a bit more in the air as he stood on tip toes.

"Ow!" he coughed a little and almost lost her hold on her, quickly bringing her feet onto the floor again.

"Ah, sorry..." Turning around she pulled Eren's hand away which was rubbing his jaw after her leg accidentally hit him again.

"It's fine," he said, pulling away from her and standing up again as soon as her delicate hand touched his quickly reddening cheek for more reasons than one. "I should just go get something to stand on."

Historia stood straight, pouting a little dejected, "... I... if you... don't mind then..."

Eren blinked and nodded at her pointing finger before moving forward again and kneeling down on the soft grass.

The blonde walked behind him and placed her hands on his shoulders, feeling Eren's hands move back behind her feet as she suddenly pushed herself up as he leaned down further, feeling his arms move behind her ankles and touch her thighs, pulling her upwards and onto his shoulders.

As the brunet stood up slowly, he audibly gulped, feeling Historia's thighs nestled between the sides of his head, and... her lower region pressed right up behind his neck.

Trying to not think about the thin layer of fabric, he was glad at least that Historia can't see his face from here as he moved her over, this time, her hands reaching just far enough to grasp the rope again.
A minute later, she was all done and Eren slowly moved back and lowered himself to the ground, letting Historia come off.

"Yay! You did it!" one boy quickly rushed up and grabbed the bench of the swing, sitting down on it quickly as Historia told the other children to step back so they wouldn't get hit accidentally.

The tall boy pushed himself upwards and let his legs swing in the small arc before he swung back the opposite way and ended up swinging his legs widely which disrupted the whole movement.

Instructing him and the other children that went on turn by turn, Eren and Historia slowly began making progress as the boys and girls did as instructed and managed to accomplish 'the swing' with varying degrees of success.

Eren caught some of the kids who ended up slipping off in midair fast enough as Historia reassured those who became a little motion sick.

In the end however, the kids were all happy with something new to do in the newly transformed farmlands.

"Ah… if only retaking the wall was this easy…" Eren mumbled, "though… I'd only be able to do it with your help anyway."

Historia shook her head slightly, not without her insides becoming a little fuzzy, "you'll be fine. Even if the worst case came to pass, you won't be in any danger."

Eren looked down, considering how he had lost all his grip with only Historia now who had witnessed it. Giving out and failing people who weren't even aware of how he had given up on them.

"If your will falters again then…" the blonde lifted her finger to his chest, feeling the outline of the key and then to the stone also around his neck, "perhaps that can remind you of what you have to do."

The Titan shifter nodded for a moment after feeling it through his shirt. "Yeah… I'll hold on and return to you so you can beat some sense into me."

She smiled softly and nodded, saying as though he won't need to do so at all as he wouldn't fail.

"You will succeed, somehow… I know you will…" Historia said it once more as they let the gentle dimmer of the children playing around them continue. "I believe in you."

Eren felt her hand reach out to him as he took it in his and squeezed gently, not able to give her any other response.

Noticing to their side Eren caught sight of two of the kids pushing each other while arguing over something. He was about to step over to them before Historia broke off from him towards his line of sight.

"Hey!" she exclaimed as she stepped in between them, separating the two, "why are you fighting?"

"Gi, he hid my shoe somewhere!" The boy stomped his bare foot as he emphasized it.

"That's because he took my pillow last night!" the other one instantly accused, not denying it.

The Queen sighed as the two glared at each other and pointed fingers.
"Alright, both of you go back now and return both the shoe and the pillow now," she began telling them off and scolding them. "How would you like it if someone else stole – "

Eren shuffled awkwardly as the sudden lecture continued for several minutes, not knowing what to do as he stood aside, feeling his mouth form a soft smile at how natural it seemed.

"Both of you won't be stealing from now on, alright? Or there will be severe punishments." The Queen struggled to think of anything that she could actually bring herself to do upon the children. If they were the usual adults she had been dealing with recently, she wouldn't hesitate to threaten stripping them of their properties in a flash.

Against the kids whom she wouldn't harm, she grinned as creepily as she could, like she thought Eren would in the past when it came to slaying Titans, doing her best to bluff her way.

After a look of confusion, the kids ran off slowly after paling a little as horns seem to grow up from the blonde's head.

"… Historia, stop abusing the orphans." Eren told her off as the kids suddenly looked very gloomy after apologizing to each other. "Don't start scaring them with beatings or anything like that."

"Huh?! Those little troublemakers are asking for it! I just threatened them a little, it's not like I'd start actually disciplining them." she pouted at him in annoyance for not taking her side. "Perhaps you want a punishment instead since you seem fixated on it in your mind?"

"N-No thanks, I'm fine." Eren reassured and suddenly began inching away at Historia's gaze, suddenly as she picked up some of the remaining robe that hadn't be unused and holding it like a whip.

The Titan shifter increased his pace and began to worry what sort of punishment awaited Historia was thinking of.

"I remember… it was the first time you showed me that book…"

' "Before that I never thought of the world beyond the walls…"'

' "I would just pass each day staring at the sky, and the clouds."'

' "And I saw the look in your eyes..."'

' "At that moment, I realized for the first time... that I wasn't free."'

"To be honest I don't really know why… but if it's for the sake of taking my freedom back..."

"Then this strength comes out from within me."

---

**After Sealing the Wall – On Top of Shinganshina Walls**

'We were free… because we were born into this world.'

Awakening his eyes just before pulling himself out as he focused his hardening throughout his entire Titan, he recalled the reason with which he transformed this time.

The brunet blinked as he pulled himself out and inhaled the air again as Mikasa quickly descended beside him and picked him up.
His green eyes took in the outside of the wall, the first time he had taken a step outside of them, but before he knew it, he already returned on top of the wall.

"Any enemies?!" Hanji called out again as a soldier confirmed nobody, "keep your eyes open! What about the hole?!"

It had only taken half a minute at most, but in that time, the wall had been sealed off.

'The hole from that day...' Eren glanced to the side, still remembering it clearly, the cracks on the wall from where the giant hand had latched onto before pulling himself up, the damage unrepaired as the area wouldn't have been touched for half a decade.

He had repaired and regained it, another wall that separated him from what he sought.

For some reason, it felt like the last time he would be using it. The strength within him was flowing, making his blood run hot.

Little by little, the moderate amount of heat he rebuilt recently was burning out.

And he knew he would have to find something else to hold onto at this rate.

"Even if it goes wrong, the enemy will be confused and break rank at the sight of Eren running away!" Hanji concluded, "the only question is whether or not Reiner will be able to see that far ahead –"

"He will." Eren stated with absolute certainty, without hesitation. "I know he will."

Centre of Shinganshina

The Armoured Titan user sighed as he advanced towards Eren who had stopped in the middle of the city, where a fountain lay unused.

He had taken the time to ascend the wall before sliding down it once more, though it didn't take any big effort in the grand scheme of things, he rested his still frustrated nerves as he approached his opponent.

Eren hadn't moved against him, instead getting into stance and not lashing out at him, hardening his first in preparation with the shining crystal.

His target and the completion of their mission lay right in front of him, yet seemed so far away.

If he could beat Eren here, then it was all over.

"He's not charging at me,' Reiner observed acknowledgingly, 'now that he's attained hardening, the chances of me winning alone are slim.'

Concluding his disadvantage, he drew as much power into his legs, arms and body. He would have to strike as fast as possible, even then the blond Shifter knew he was slower.

'In that case –'

Bending his back down he went into a short charge, quickly closing the distance as he raised an arm and saw Eren take a step back.
Swinging his arm hard and fast, he saw Eren dodge it by jumping to the side, barely grazing his shoulder.

Reiner tutted, not expecting otherwise unless he could taunt Eren into acting reckless again.

His first crashed into the house before he knelt down again, turning his direction and going in for a tackle.

Once more, Eren jumped back and slammed the palm of his hand onto his shoulder, pushing him back slightly and stopping his attack again.

Reiner cursed as he slid slightly before stepping forward once more, sensing that he would need to try a charge if he were to have enough momentum to push Eren back.

Raising up his left arm into a first with enough force to send his head flying, he prepared for Eren to inevitably dodge it.

While they were about equal in strength, technique aside, his enemy's Titan form was lighter from not being armoured all over the body.

He watched as his enemy bent his knees to duck under the attack as Reiner considered the next step, feeling a counterattack would be dealt with the moment he swung wide.

'Ah - !' Reiner gasped as his enemy didn't duck.

Instead he had struck back.

Reiner felt his elbow crack and a sudden fast force crashed into his face, breaking of chips of his armoured jaw and blinding him as he felt himself about to go down.

His blows had all been surprising and well responded.

Eren had clearly been training his Titan power frequently.

'But what the hell was that...' Reiner felt himself begin to panic for a moment, putting more consideration into what had just happened.

Without losing sight of him, he clearly saw Eren's left arm dropping low and he seemed to pull back his right.

That had been the counterattack he had expected.

Instead, his vision felt like it had changed, all of a sudden, he had been hit with the opposite arm.

'Too fast...' He forced himself to concentrate.

His own first had missed his opponents head after they had stepped in, hitting his face and locking his left arm downwards before he could hit.

It was a strange risk to take, not knowing if the arm reach and angle would impact.

Turning his right eye, the armour smashed off around it, he felt a powerful fist this time from his enemy's right fist, an attack he could have foreseen.

The power from behind it caused his jaw to twist and stretch, crushing the armour on both sides of his face.
It sent him rolling to the side as his enemy screamed hatred with held back rage at him.

For some reason, despite this attack dealing far greater damage to him, the fast and risky move felt almost unnatural.

‘… He'd have never done that in the past…’ Thinking back to all the times they had spared, Eren often made reckless moves.

But that blow felt too confident and assured.

‘…’ He moved himself up from his knees and continued watching his enemy properly, the practiced calculated attack now showing up again.

'I knew it… fighting alone… I'm not going to be able to bite Eren out of his Titan.'

Either way, he understood from the start who was the stronger between them now.

‘… If he’s this strong now, just how much further can he reach…’ Reiner considered all the Titan shifters one by one, wondering if any amongst them might perhaps match him at his peak.

At this time at least, he was certain some of his comrades would.

But at this rate… someday...

'I guess my only choice now is to –'

After Reiner's "Defeat"

Eren watched the steam come out as the cheers rang out.

The thunder spears had landed, taking off his armour after Eren had thrown him into position.

His eyes stared in wonder at the unmoving Armoured Titan as his and Hanji's squad cheered again.

‘…’ He felt something wrong. ‘… That's it… it can't be… all that’s…'

The memories continued to befuddle him, toying with him in every little way as though he had misunderstood every one of them.

'This can't be it…'

The man whom he hated more than anyone was exposed, his head completed blown off.

He felt no neither happiness nor relief.

Frozen in place, he watched.

There was no way it could be over yet.

Eren realized how he didn't want it to be over yet.

Before the Armoured Titan roared a tremendous cry.

Sina Orphanage
Her legs moved slowly from the wet grass, as the rain recently began to increase and the air grew ever colder as wind came.

She saw the guards being dragged around by the children in her stead as they pulled on their arms to their dispassionate attempts to wriggle free of their clutches.

They were all meant to gather up as lunch time began while Historia stepped outside again, looking to the South as a feeling of worry invaded her again.

Wondering what to do, if there was any use of training with the ODM gear, blades or hand to hand technique for any purpose at all if she somehow could transfer herself back to the front lines again,

This time however, joining the forefront would be of her own will.

She sighed however pushing the thought aside, knowing that wouldn't be allowed by the military government.

Looking around, she saw the guards being bothered by all the kids asking for help with lunch as they kept her in their sights in case of any assassin of some sort.

Suddenly, looking back across the fields, a lone girl caught her eye.

She was sitting somewhere by the tree, a different one but not too far away from the one which Eren had helped her tie up.

Glancing back at the distracted guards, she went over the couple hundred metres to her across the lightly squishing grass.

"Hey," Historia called to the girl after she reached a spot beside her, beneath the tree leaves canopy. "Are you alright?"

The girl turned to her slowly and looked up at her, not saying anything and somehow bearing a painfully sad face, showing she had struggled in her circumstances before coming here.

The young blonde girl nodded after a little while without a word before returning to the book she was reading.

"Lunch is about to start," the Queen pointed out, "aren't you going to join everyone else?"

"… No thank you," she replied back politely and flipping a page as she continued to read in solitude.

Historia frowned at her a little, noticing her clothes that seemed too unsuitable for her when she had personally provided clothing from the wardrobe she had in the palace along with buying out from a certain company so that all the children who came here would be properly clothed.

"Mind if I sit down next to you?" After being given a nod in reply, she sat down besides the little girl, resting her back against the tree trunk, "… what are you reading?"

"… It's about the Devil, the swan girl and the boy who could speak with the wind." The girl said after a while, not giving a title.

"Hm?" Historia quirked an eyebrow, never hearing of that one before despite herself believing she had read all the fables told in the general storybooks she had handed out. "What's it about?"

The young girl looked up at her curiously, as though she was somehow surprised Historia didn't
"… It's when long, long ago, the people and everyone lived in Paradise." She began the tale, flipping back the pages to the start of the chapter. "One day though, there was a girl who everyone admired since she had the gift to fly."

"To fly…?" Historia spoke, thinking of the ODM gear itself and the wings of freedom.

The thought of flight however must have existed since a long time ago after all. Perhaps when the birds were first seen in the air.

"Yeah, she always wore white clothes like a saint of God, or an angel from the Other Paradise. She was blessed by the swans which guarded her cot as a baby. It was one of several divine blessing which humans could receive. It also gave her the power to resist anyone's power and authority, even the Gods." she continued, surprising the Queen a little at how she was able to read and use words for her age, "but one day, she wandered by an old apple tree in a distance away from her village."

"Apple tree, huh… that's where she met the Devil I imagine?" The elder blonde inquired as the younger nodded her head enthusiastically.

"The Devil tempted her and tried to trick her into eating the forbidden fruit of the apple tree. However because of the blessing, she could see that the Devil only had cruel intentions for the world." The girl seemed to like the apparent main character, "so then the devil offered her a deal instead. The swan maiden was given power by the Devil which was far greater than him, and she could easily destroy him."

"Hmm, but she did not?" The Queen guessed and the girl nodded to affirm again.

"Instead of destroying the Devil, she instead destroyed the tree from which the apple that had given her power had been taken from, so that nobody else could ever have the same power." The Queen frowned at that a little but continued listening, "she then went to a distant land after gathering the people who would follow her. There, she build the 'Third Paradise'."

"Three Paradises… Heaven, her homeplace and now the one she built..." She understood the concept of a utopia. "Why did the Devil wish for that?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders instead, not knowing the answer. "The Gods were unhappy about this so they split the sea across, breaking apart the two earthen Paradises. And then… they even cut off the wings of the swan maiden. The wingless maiden was now trapped on the new Paradise alone, with nobody left and separated from her people and family. She was lonely without anyone else and unable to reach her family that deeply missed her. But… on the other side, a boy appeared someday."

"Huh, so he was one who would speak with the wind..." She realised how interested she had suddenly began in the unheard tale.

"Mhm, he was also blessed by the hurricanes and cold winds which protected him as a baby. He offered help to the swan maiden who could no longer fly and instead spoke to the wind which delivered her messages across the sea. They reached her people who were glad to know she was alright and angry at the Gods for what they had done. A month later, her family built a boat and with the wind on their side, the boy asked the wind to carry the ship to them. However… the sea was angry and swallowed the ship."
"..." She struggled to keep silent but continued on while watching the girl's happy expression despite it's strange direction not suitable for kids in her mind.

"But, her elder sister managed to survive and reached the shore where she embraced the swan maiden. The girl thanked the boy so much that the Devil began to grow jealous of him and his ability to control the wind as he continued sending messages for the girl and the rest of her now deceased family, for the wind was able to reach even the heavens."

"... So... the girl felt happy before the end thanks to the boy's power?" Historia asked.

The story was told like it was history.

"Yep, Christa was so happy that it made the Devil real mad!" The girl suddenly closed the book as her spine shivered strangely and her head hurt when the young girl smiled up at her, and she suddenly realised she couldn't see her eyes.

"... C... Christa...?" Historia felt cold suddenly, as though she was forgetting something important all of a sudden.

"Mhm!" The girl tucked the book on her lap as though the story was over.

"W-Wait... what happened in the end? What did the Devil do...?" Historia blinked. And the blinked again.

The space in which the girl had been was empty.

Vanished completely without a trail, Historia stood up suddenly and touched the ground and the tree where she was moments ago.

Her hands shivered at what just had happened.

'... That was... a hallucination...?' Somehow she doubted in, the sensation and response all too real, '... it must have been... a memory...from Eren...? Or from... Frieda...?'

Standing back, she walked around the tree several times.

Nothing changed,

The girl was completely gone.

The unfinished story remained in her head.

Suddenly the wish to see Eren that moment burned her mind as it tried to recall something.

She knew she had to wait right now until Eren returned.

Historia turned slowly again, gazing to the southern sky while touching her hand to the stone that rested on top of her chest, feeling her heartbeat in line with it.

The wind around her engulfing her as if wishing to carry her words to someone else.

She could only hope her wishes to him would reach.

Above the Destroyed Gate of Wall Maria
Eren felt himself stir as the memory went by, for a brief moment his head reminding him of Historia.

He imagined she was watching up right now, discontent in her place.

He tried to gasp but no air moved from his lungs and his stomach felt like stone.

For a little while, he had been flying at abnormally fast speed.

The sky above him, unable to move at all as he was flying through the sky.

The impact made it feel like his entire body had been crushed, his skull caved in completely around his throbbing brain that radiated and almost leaked the strange memories of the recent days before.

'… Bastard...' He tried making his hand into a first and move himself up but he couldn't move a finger.

He realised Bertholdt must have thrown him crashing with a single kick.

'… How... am I supposed to beat... someone like that...' His mind broke down a little as the key form of his childhood friend appeared before him.

Armin somewhere was still fighting on.

'...How far was I blown back...' Eren wondered as he tried to think of any weakness he could somehow manage to exploit. 'Did I hit the wall...? Or was I blown back somewhere further...?'

The last time he could recall was when Reiner had thrown a punch in their first fight and sent him flying.

He felt just as powerless as back then.

Barely able to get up, Eren had been spending much of last night to think of it.

A way to defeat the Colossal Titan by himself.

A difficult fear kept swaying in his stomach, sensing that if he couldn't find a way now, he would lose one of the most important people to him.

He could hear almost distant cries somewhere nearby before a sword pierced through his nape, cutting a gap and letting sound in though the mass of red flesh and nerve tissues.

"Eren! Wake up!" Armin's voiced reached him, awakening him again. "We're going to see the ocean!"

Strength was back in his body, albeit not in the quantity he had hoped for, but he felt enough power to press his hand down slowly and stretch his back upwards while opening his eyes at last.

For a moment longer, he pictured Historia's face, her hair blowing softly in the fields outside the orphanage where she would have requested to go at a time like this to forget her loneliness.

He wondered how frustrated she might be, unable to do anything.

Along with everyone else waiting behind the walls, his heart throbbed as he was reminded of what she said to him during his resting week with her.
Eren looked up at Bertholdt's skinless face, just the same as that day as he listened to Armin's plan.

The massive Titan took a step closer as Eren slowly moved back across the top of the wall, making sure Armin did slip accidentally.

He kept eye contact between their Titans as he felt Bertholdt's consciousness challenging him.

Each word of Armin's plan brought him closer to realising the fear that was engulfing him.

'No... hold on just...' Eren was well aware of the lack of time now, 'let me... think of something else...'

His Titan body was exhausted. He could harden his body fully one last time, but he doubted he could transform once more properly. His left arm was still healing and his legs were damage.

'I came up with this plan myself,' his childhood friend began speaking, 'but... whether it'll work or not is going to depend on how much I can take.'

The brunet kept staring sidewards in controlled fear at the blond on his shoulder, telling him he had already committed himself fully to it and that it was too late to stop him now.

Eren looked at him. Probably for the last time.

...

As if knowing that this would bring the end of their friendship one way or another.

Things could never go back to how they were.

He had said the contrary the night before to comfort Mikasa, whom he had so long denied and rejected out of jealousy for his elder sibling.

What was lost could not be recovered.

Eren had accepted that somewhere along the way without realising.

But he didn't want to lose what he had right now.

He didn't wish to lose his best friend, but... he felt it was too late now.

Armin had decided it.

"Sorry, Eren but... I can't die until I see the ocean first." His childhood friend's eyes showed the truth behind them clearly, "so, I'm gonna stop before things get really bad... and you'll need to handle the rest, okay? B-Because you know... I... I was never that brave."

...

'No...’ Eren’s whole head pierced as he violently gritted his jaw. 'You... were always the bravest of us all.'

...

"Understand, Eren?" Armin turned to him again, staring deeply through his Titan eyes, "didn't we promise we'd go see the ocean together? Have I ever lied to you Eren?"
It was the first time his best friend was lying to him.

Eren could easily see through such a weakly crafted attempt to hide his true intent.

Thinking back to the last proper conversation this Eren and this Armin would ever have.

"I dunno why, but... when I think about getting that freedom back... I can feel it. The strength willing up inside me."

Eren recalled the words he spoke clearly.

Freedom.

What he so longed for, and the source of his strength.

Realizing the difference in the nature of their desire and dream and the source of his strength, in what he felt were last moments.

'For Armin... it would be... what gives him strength, is seeing the outside world itself.'

Eren concluded so.

While arriving at that conclusion, he felt a tingle of sadness.

It was something so obvious but caught up in the first stage of leaving the walls someday with Armin and everyone else, he had distracted himself from considering it.

In the end... their paths seemed to have been destined to split from the beginning.

They were going in different ways, to different places, along roads that he prayed would never cross in conflict.

While thinking so, he reached out his right hand to the blond who looked up at him and his jaw dropped in horror.

Feeling himself he lost his balance without noticing that the top of the wall's edge crumbled, causing him to fall down after it as he heard Armin cry his name before he hardened the face of his body to the impact.

The brunet couldn't cry in pain as the impact knocked the air out of his lungs again. He spat out some fluids from his insides as he tried to hang on with his consciousness.

The blast of hot air was suddenly felt as the temperature rose a little even inside his Titan form that was already considerably hot.

His body stretched as he pulled himself upwards, feeling his right arm to where the hole was as he brought forth his hardening ability into the gap.

"Ah..." He felt it closing in before he managed to pull put, exposing himself to the heat outside as he gazed up to it.

Armin was still struggling as he bought him time.

Eren dragged himself across the floor as he felt his ODM gear, preparing it all as he desperately
moved into position before being spotted.

It was already too late.

Whether to believe in his own power or his comrades.

His power could not defeat Bertholdt alone.

As the steam stopped at last, he saw Armin's body drop down.

Unable to look at him, he couldn't let what had been sacrificed go in vain.

But…

'*If this was the price to pay for freedom... I would never have paid it...'*

His best friend had entrusted him with his everything.

Eren somehow felt it like that.

His last words to him, a lie and a wish.

There was no way that he could let him go.

There was no way he could let Armin go.

Armin had entrusted it all to him.

So…

There's no way that he could back down.

If it was up to him, and Armin's life had been placed in his hands, he would do anything to give it all back to Armin.

He would not back down.

And so he paid the price for it.

"Got you."

Eren spoke the words after he had already shot himself into the air after latching in the hooks just once and moving in a dangerous arc in which he would die if he didn't latch onto something before he fell again.

His target's nape completely exposed to him, his blades and body flying through the air, higher than even the great Colossus, surpassing him by a few metres, the highest he had ever gone.

Pressing the switches in, the gas was triggered and wires pulled in. He swung his blades in arc and took down the one who started it that day.

"Are you... Eren Jaeger?" The bearded man had asked him, somehow a strange familiar connection clicking within him.

Not taking any time to think, he held the blade to Bertholdt's throat and slowly dug into it.
"You don't look anything like your father." The Beast Titan's words stopped him.

"…!" Eren's eyes scanned him again in alarm.

The bearded man who was present in the memories the time he kissed Historia's hand. He had been looking through someone else's eyes as his father on the ground looked up at that bearded man.

His hair was different, not as grown out and messy, as though he had trimmed it all back from how it was in the past. For a brief moment he wondered of the age of the seemingly elderly man.

"… Who are you?" Eren asked finally, "how do you know my father?!"

In his mind, he considered it, how long this man may have been behind the walls, someone working with his father –

The Titan shifter's green eyes took in his facial features once more.

"Please believe me. You and I are on the same side." The man seemed to hold deep resentment at the thought of him, "we are both victims of that man, our father… and you, Eren, have been brainwashed by him."

'… "Our" father…?' Eren's head hurt but he kept the blade at the throat of the Colossal Titan shifter, the memories of his father suddenly under uncertainty.

"Eren… I promise… someday I will rescue you..."

"Welcome back… Armin…" Eren spoke the sincere words as he strongly hugged his friend's body.

After all that ended up happening, there was no way he could back down.

His childhood friend had returned.

The price for that too was beginning to weight on his heart.

"Huh…?" Armin shuffled in confusion at the fierce embrace, not recalling what ended up happening.

Yet somehow feeling a strange sort of guilt growing.

4 Hours After the End of the Battle – The Basement

The key and sunstone had still held on for all this time, though the strings had become intertwined and thrown into a mess that he had to pull it out from.

His breath remained steady as he continued down the path of his childhood, through the door that the key wouldn't open and into the sealed off room.

Strange memories kept popping up as he wondered through here, as though he had been here before.

"Yeah… I think, that's all I can remember… but... I don't remember anything about who said it..."
His memory reminded him of the bearded man from earlier, the Beast Titan.

The keyhole in which the key turned inside, unsealing the culmination of what they had tried to reach.

His head kept twitching as he feels he had seen these books before, while watching his father with them as well.

Putting his hand on the book's cover, he trembled for a moment, some feeling akin to deja vu confusing his head that began to ache strangely.

Mikasa placed her hand, making eye contact with him as they both held a side of the front cover. Lingering for a moment, Mikasa tugged it slowly as Eren made no resistance, watching It fall open to the "image" the clicked in side his head suddenly.

The seal of his predecessor's memories opened.

---

The Ocean – South Coast of Paradis

"… Reiner," the black haired woman's voice called for him as he continued watching back, the wall already far, far away. "… He's gone."

With it, the promise he made to his best friend was forever broken.

---

And yeah Battle of Shinganshina is done, the events outside of it occur as in canon basically and yeah… RtS is honestly my favourite arc lol but for EreHisu, I can't really do much with it haha, not that the same doesn't apply for pretty much all the arcs lol but yeah, want to get things moving on the next relationship stage which yeah… is also kinda a difficulty I've been having for the past year in regards to next chapter the key scene is to be done… but yeah!

Ending Scene: WARNING MANGA SPOILERS - CONTAINS SPOILERS FOR SEASON 4 (OR WHAT WILL BE SEASON 4 AT LEAST)

"The day after tomorrow… the festival will begin as scheduled," the boy spoke thoughtfully, remembering of what the elder soldier had said.

The elder nodded, quietly looking around as the various doctors seemed to have increased and a slightly more lively mood was already in the air.

"… Falco, I would like to tell you a story," the wounded soldier reminisced. "After that I'd like to ask one last favour from you."

Blinking at him, Falco nodded happily, sadness mixed in as he sensed some parting approaching but ready to listen to the wounded soldier's experience and thoughts. "Of course Mr Kruger."
Zukunft

Chapter Notes

Ahhh the goddess hath returned lol, yikes it's been over 6/7 years haha, but yeah thus does the wait for the next mystery ever continue haha, but ah dear hope somehow or other, the other goddess of blonde both get POVs sometime along with Eren's soon TM!

But phew, back to the walls again here now, but now the 2nd phase of this fic is starting now, it will hopefully get more interesting on the shipping front/in general!

Discord invite: discord.gg/BnGuCwU (delete the space right after the "discord", no need for the triple 'w' – also there are 4 now lol, but its there if you want it!)

"speech"

'thoughts' - Italics

Chapter 13 - Zukunft

, ~2001

That day which changed everything started when the girl was back home and heard the screams from outside.

Feeling something off, she pushed back the straw covers of her bed in the wooden house that she and her father lived in.

Her mother had been killed some years ago and her father became more demanding of her then afterwards.

The girl never did understand why he seemed to blame her when it was him that killed her.

Her father was awake as well as she stood back, away from his angry steps as he stuck his head outside the window and growled behind his teeth.

Moving to the other side of the room, he grabbed the axe that hanged on the wall, meant for cutting down trees, not battle.

The man looked at her again as the girl realised she was trembling while met with his gaze.

"Stay inside and don't leave." He ordered her.

She nodded back at him, wondering if it was an act of kindness he had given her for a long time or
so she wouldn't cause trouble for him.

As soon as her father opened the door, she knew she wasn't going to find out as her trembling stopped and his head rolled past her on the floor.

She stared back at the unknown bearded man, the metal helmet covering his expression, who looked at her uncaringly, the bloodied blade resting confidently in his hand.

The man watched her from the door of the house a little longer before snorting, as though he didn't want to bother with a child and left.

Unsure of whether to be glad for his mercy or angry at the murder of her father, she walked other, no longer trembling as she stared at the headless corpse fallen in the doorway.

The last instruction of the man remained in her as she stared a while longer.

In a few moments, his life had disappeared.

As though it was only natural, the screams outside which followed spoke of only similar fates that others of the village were receiving.

The girl waited for a moment, glancing outside up and down the pass before turning back at her last remaining family.

Apologizing for what she did not know, the girl left her home while doing her best to hide in the shadows, her voice drowned in the burning village around her.

She looked past the fence surrounding the village which was torn down in places, to the tree which was hidden behind the hill here.

Her only friend came from the village beyond as she rushed towards it, not wanting for it all to end.

The days in which she'd spend with her only friend.

Her beating heart stung, somehow telling her that his village would surely be similarly being overrun given the short distance between them.

"... Not yet..." her voice inaudible to anyone but herself, she hoped that the Goddess of Fate may here them, "... we promised..."

Inside, she struggled to answer the possibility if he was already dead.

"We... promised..."

There was no way to overturn this anymore. Her home was destroyed, they would be taken in by the stronger power if they did not escape now.

If she could just reach her friend, they could run away together now.

That was the hope she clung onto.

The only hope was to run away.

The will to fight back that the boy spoke was futile here.
Beneath the night sky, she began ascending the hill as she looked back and scanned around the flaming red lights that blazed across the small settlement.

The Eldian tribe had come.

"... 8 years left to live..."

... 

"There's no doubt about it?" the elderly man next to her inquired, trying to ascertain the facts.

The price of being a Titan shifter.

"The only confirmation we have is in the notes of Eren Jaeger's father, Grisha Jaeger. We do not have any reason to believe he would lie in the books he had locked up in his basement, however..." the first messenger continued his announcement.

Historia felt her head was in the clouds. After having been unable to sleep the past night while Eren and the others would be set to return in the morning, she hoped the details that had just been given were a misunderstanding of some sort.

'13 years...' the number in her head had already somehow become a curse alone from her contempt for it, 'once you become a Titan shifter... you only have 13 years left to live... no matter who?'

"In the line of the Reiss family, there have undoubtedly been several inheritor of the Founding Titan that was passed down," one of the officials began.

"We will... go through everything from the Reiss family again to check if this is accurate," another spoke, giving orders to his assistants who were placed in charge of all the seized documents from the hidden royal family to the high ranking aristocrats that knew the secrets along with them.

Somehow within herself, she wondered if there was much point. She had never met her uncle Uri but she knew he was younger than her father, who while past his prime, he wasn't old by all means.

It all alone confirmed it to her when her sister would have still been young back then. There had been a need for her to inherit the power seeing as her father refused to.

"This had bought as valuable time however... within a close future, we are in danger of losing the Titan powers we hold." The room had all become doubting, trying to reaffirm their stance and intentions within the new limited gap.

Historia would have needed to try and hold back a scoff at their transparency. But right now, she felt her heart distracted in strange thoughts.

'Eren's 15 right now. That means... he's going to die at 23.' Sadness creased her eyebrows, suddenly wondering, what he'd do in such a time now knowing of it limit. '... The marriageable age is 18... That means 5 years afterwards...'

She vaguely wondered why that point stuck in her head. From her studies, she knew that this restriction was only recent and done to limit population after the fall of Wall Maria.

'Once people settle back in, I could call for such a thing to be lowered...' Her mind pictured him a little older with slightly longer hair, 'if it's something like 16... he could live married for 7 years...'

The number didn't seem much better however few more years she seemed to add onto it.
Running time through every tick of the clock seemed to make years feel they would be over in a few more days.

Last moments that seemed to be near as she felt she didn't have much time left to make her move.

"In other words… along with our knowledge of the outside world, this changes our objective drastically as well." The atmosphere set the room as all the usual big talkers had become quiet.

The direction of the talk changed as the council around them began discussing the new time limit they had. While now they had also recovered the power of the Colossal Titan in Armin Arlet, they currently lacked the means to extend their hold on the Titan powers as technological heads and leaders were sent to be called in.

The atmosphere however was more hopeful than usual. The expedition had been a success in the grand scheme.

"… We'll need to schedule a full conference on this matter within this week, for now inform the Survey Corps to gather and arrive here when possible." The commander-in-chief nodded along to some of his aides who had been compiling all the information and recording everything that had been said. "And has anything else been reported from commander Hanji?"

While Historia had returned to the orphanage for a while to distract herself, the struggling feelings of her being unable to directly contribute still laying in her heaviness, all the other commanders and military leaders had waited for the response at the capital.

She had intended to return to Trost and see Eren again however the meeting had instantly been called at the capital and a series of messenger had been coming to and fro them all day, delivering the words that the new commander of the Survey Corps had been surmising from the books and studying for any clues.

It had already been decided to convey a greater meeting once all the information was known. For now however, Historia sat on the throne with a council of about twelve, for now the only ones besides commander Pixis and his small group along with the Survey Corps who were aware of it all.

The young Queen felt a little unease at it all. Wondering if this was the truth of the world that her sister had struggled for several years with.

Just as it was for her, the 'curse of Ymir' must have already began, slowly counting down the years they would spend together even if she had met her death back then.

"Nothing definitive sir," the messenger answered and raised his head again, "ah… but there is another thing."

The man was nodded to continue, worn out from the fast relay message he had come to deliver.

"It's just… Eren Jaeger and Mikasa Ackerman have been taken into custody for not following orders." Historia blinked a little while the rest of the room screwed their eyes. "I was not informed of the exact reason, but… they are currently serving their time locked up."

As with the first messenger that had arrived informing them off causalities and that now Hanji had taken command, they were also told of the two who dealt the finishing blow to their two prime enemies.

"I propose for the immediate release of Eren Jaeger and Mikasa Ackerman. Their contributions
hold far more merit than whatever orders they ignored compared to their accomplishments." The blonde Queen sighed before raising her voice, her request approved easily. "And, I wish to have an audience with them."

---

**Late Fall of the Year 850 – Trost District Prison**

Dina Fritz.

The smiling Titan.

His whole body lurched upwards as he screamed from recalling it all once more, awakening from the dream of memories like a bad joke.

The cold stone walls reverberated back his yell as he heard a couple people awakening around him and shaking off bed covers.

Sweat clung to his shirt as he threw the covers away, staring at his unfamiliar surroundings, somehow feeling like he should be elsewhere.

"Where am I..." he called aloud as he got up and approached the bars, just as a familiar face wandered before him from the other side of the bars. "Ah..."

Armin had returned.

Somehow a world without him as his best friend came to his mind.

He recalled the cause of his confinement but found little reason to care.

If disobeying the orders lead to this, there was no regret that he felt.

If the scene repeated, he'd choose this route without hesitation.

If the same thing repeated with anyone else who was close to him, he'd do the same thing again.

The memories of old that had shown of his father's memories up to the day he stole the Founding Titan

"The owl called it…. 'The Curse of Ymir'.” Eren began reciting the information, in slightly greater detail through the awakened memories than his father's books. "It's because they say Ymir, the Originator, died 13 years after awakening to her powers."

Armin sat next to him in the now opened prison, recording all the details for himself, creating another of the multiple records for personal checking.

8 years left to live…

A time bomb that is without switch or fuse.

The flames beginning the countdown descending into single digits quickly.

8 years. Or less.

8 more winters, 8 more springs, 8 more summers and 7 more autumns.
If even that long.

He was still the prime target from their enemy beyond the sea.

Their identity of "Marley" boding a similar vibe to the boundary that separated them itself.

A boundary that the could cross easily, while they could not.

Regardless of what happened to him in the course of the next inevitable battles.

Eren Jaeger had no future beyond those 8 years.

The sparks that lit the fire to the time bomb cannot be put out.

Eren thought through this again and again.

…

'… I'm tried…'

Somehow, the two powers within him stirred him into sleep again, hoping to wake up to a different dream, more closer to what he had seen after kissing Historia's hand.

---

**Beyond the Walls - Marleyian Ship**

The bed rocked and shook him away, hopefully from a bad dream that had spanned years.

Crossing the ocean in a ship, the border between the continent and the island of Paradis along with his comrades.

It's was pitch black when the blonde Titan shifter opened his eyes, the room in the ship reserved for the Eldian warriors. The two bunk beds placed adjacent in the room.

One of them had collapsed at some point, the top fallen on one end down to the bottom, rendering it unusable.

Standing up, he looked for the presence on the top bunk above from where he had been sleeping.

He would have to gently stir his best friend awake from whatever sleeping position he had managed to crawl into this time just like the last time.

The Armoured Titan shifter had gotten use to this daily routine for the past 5 years, not something which bothered him even when it sometimes resulted in his legs falling and kicking him in the chin many times.

Today however, he didn't need to do that at all.

The bed lay untouched.

Because Bertholdt wasn't there anymore.

---

**Late Fall of the Year 850 – Trost District**

…
"..." Historia stared at the letter in her hand once more.

The letter which she had received from her now old friend told her of her story but nothing more.

It stirred in her heart as she stared at it, fairly sure at least Ymir wasn't the sort for a hidden message of such sorts.

The story of the girl who had once given up her life for the sake of others.

The Ymir which she had known back in the days which rejected doing such a thing again.

And the back of her leaving as she repeated the same thing knowingly, and gave up her life for Reiner and Bertholdt.

They now more or less knew the circumstances behind the warriors attack.

But she still didn't understand what it was that made Ymir to spend her final moment back then.

Like Eren, even with 8 years left to live, it was a short time left perhaps.

Yet her letter seemed to advise her of not following such a path for herself.

She wondered how long it had been since Ymir already had died.

Perhaps a month or two at most, she somehow felt from her last words that they weren't going to see each other again.

Her deceased friend had left behind her last words, wishing her luck on the choice she had made a couple months ago.

Historia felt a tear trickle down her cheek as she stared out through the empty glass.

"They are here," the guard opened the door, "come in."

The Queen quickly wiped away her wet eye as she locked eyes with one of the four people, the hollowed eyes seeming to brighten a little but did not look any more tired than her heart had been as of late.

The brunet shifter made a small smile for her, placing his hand between his head with an awkward shrug.

The steps between them closed as she made an uneven pace towards him just as the three stopped in front of her, about to bow.

"Your Majes-" Armin and Mikasa on either side of the brunet spoke before Historia closed the distance abruptly before the one between them.

The room went quiet as everyone's attention became caught by the sudden scene. Eren opened his mouth a little, feeling her arms wrap around his body and realised his own had also instinctively moved around hers.

For a brief moment, he didn't feel like he cared about the looks of everyone here as the newly appointed Queen embraced him while he held her himself, his body finding calm amongst the awkward stares.

"... Thank you. For returning." Historia told him, pulling away first, aware of what she had done
and deciding to try and play it off.

Eren nodded down at her as she held his arm softly, trying to not seem too intimate as the sudden pointed looks came his way, uncertain of what to do as he nodded to Historia.

"Your Majesty?" Mikasa suddenly sent her a pointed look, somewhat accusing her.

"Excuse me. Please, there's no need for such informalities," Historia instead directed as she turned away from Eren, "… I'm glad you're all safe. There's already one friend that hasn't returned to me."

She left the statement hang as they seemed to accept them, Historia waiting as Mikasa nodded uncertainly as well.

It was clear Eren was the closest to her. The majority of the room soon took in the meaning behind her words and accepted that it was merely a strong friendship between the two.

Only friendship and nothing more.

The bell that rang another chime made her heart tremble from how loud it was. Within her, she knew well enough now that her feelings for Eren were otherwise.

It had only been a couple days from the day of the battle. The news had arrived yesterday of the result but today had been the earliest she had been able to come.

Compared to before for the past 2 months, Eren had come to visit her every other day. One day of training to use his Titan power, another for memories and to see her.

Somehow compared to that, not seeing him for one extra day was too much.

"So, let's begin," the new commander issued them to start, the little embrace from before already forgotten in all their minds besides a few glances shared between the blonde Queen and the brunet Titan shifter.

Along with that, Armin's eyes traveled, noticing the glances they were sharing. He turned to Mikasa who had not seemed to be following as the mood turned somber and he could see the thoughts of Eren's remaining life span clouding her.

He searched elsewards at Hanji and Captain Levi who had already forgotten it and not seemed to see anything suspicious, likewise in a difficult mood.

Glancing once more to Eren next to him, he saw him staring at the Queen who looked outside the window once more.

Eren's heard turned over not just the embrace without hesitation but how he felt just as he watched her now, overcoming her pain bit by bit as he watched her.

Historia's eyes fell down on Ymir's letter that had been left on table, the memories of the past 3 years, thanking her for everything as she turned to look at her future for her own sake once more.

---

A Few Days Later - Royal Palace

"The true power of the Founding Titan can only be used if it resides inside someone from the Royal bloodline. However, if the Founding does reside inside anyone of Royal blood, they will be consumed by the will of the 145th King..."
Eren's mind cast in once more. He seemed to recall it within Frieda's memories. The conflicted feelings that were being barred by some exterior force.

'But... in some ways, with Historia it has worked...' Eren noted to himself, having seen the memories of the past and the ones he still had trouble fixing into place. But he hadn't been able to control Titans once, let alone the Titans within the Walls.

"... No, in the past, Eren has controlled pure Titans in order to escape that perilous situation." Hanji glanced to him while he nodded slightly, "we still don't know why he was able to use that power. But there is a possibility that even Eren, who is not from the royal bloodline, is able to use the Founding Titan."

'... That's right... For just one moment, that day... it felt like... everything was connected...' He traced back the face of the smiling Titan, whom he now knew as Dina Fritz. 'But only then. Why... why was it only for a moment...?'

The steam which erupted from his hand after throwing a single punch. It was only after that, when the lightning trail seemed to glance through his mind.

His brain fired when he realised it all.

His whole body that was about to shoot upwards and exclaim was suddenly calmed, as though someone had placed a calming hand on either of his shoulders.

Eren blinked, snapping his head upwards and catching Armin's attention without anyone else noticing.

At that moment, Historia's eyes also froze when he stared right at her, his mouth opening slightly as he considered it all.

'"You can't tell anyone about this."'

A familiar voice kept in his head once more.

'If... the reason it worked for that moment... was because of Dina Fritz's royal blood... but, no memories came to me back then... so then... it's possible that if I touched someone of royal blood that had been turned into a Titan... I could maybe use the power of the Founding Titan.'

His reasoning conflicted with his gut feeling. It was just a possibility, but somehow he already felt like he knew it could work. He glanced around to Mikasa next to him.

'I haven't told them yet... that the Titan who killed mom and Mr Hannes... might have been my father's first wife... and...' His eyes aligned with Historia's again, whose lips were parted slightly as she stared curiously at him while they stared in question between each other. 'If I did... then Historia... if that possibility exists, then what would the Corps do to Historia?'

He glanced to the back of commander Hanji and captain Levi who sat in front of him. After what had happened last time, in the end the captain had chose Armin. He still didn't know the full reason why, but he felt the matters showed where they stood.

'But... for me...' Eren's thoughts decided as he fixed his face into a small facade. 'What's more important than humanity is... I won't risk it... Historia... I won't...'

While staring back into her blue eyes, her expression returned neutral again as they glanced away from each other, saying they would talk later.
Through it all, Armin continued watching silently.

Marley Continent – Warriors Conference

The Marleyian soldiers strolled past them and around the room, make it clear that they weren't going to miss this meeting.

After returning to the continent, Reiner had stayed in confinement for a few days, before he at last was taken to the courtroom at the capital.

He had not been given the chance to see his mother, wondering if he ever would. His cousin must have grown up by now as well. Given her age now, she would be at the time when she could join the warrior corps. He passed on the small doubt, certain the chances for her succeeding were low even if she had.

While delving into trivial matters and little concerns, he was escorted and told to sit down and wait. Zeke had already been sitting there and waiting, the cigarette fumes disappearing into the air.

They didn't talk for a while, the Armoured Titan shifter already committed to whatever would come now.

Compared to him, the Beast Titan shifter didn't seem worried at all when he broke the silence. "Don't take the blame all on yourself when you go in."

"..." The blond's eyes narrowed further as he glanced to his superior. "Then, do you have some way to explain without someone taking responsibility?"

Zeke shrugged slightly, folding his legs while resuming his smoke.

"It's over for me, right?" Glancing to the guards who were listening in, knowing the captain wouldn't say anything here.

"Well I wonder about that..." Scratching his chin, his hand run through his now slightly trimmed beard.

Reiner struggled to get at what he was saying. As usual, the elder warrior always seemed to have a mysterious screen around him.

He wished he could speak out again once in a while instead of keeping thoughts to himself. They had spoken on the ship and Zeke had told him he would take responsibility for losing the Colossal Titan power.

One Titan power was lost due to one of their actions each. That had been the only advise his superior had said to sharing the blame.

Reiner considered the way it sounded. If the Colossal Titan was lost because of what his superior would be held accountable for, then he should be the one responsible for bringing his best friend to his death.

While thinking he would shoulder it own when his failure was too great, the doors opened and an escort stepped out. "Commander Zeke?"

The Beast Titan shifter nodded and got up dropping the cigar into an ash tray near the table.
“Are you not worried at all?” Reiner asked the elder Shifter again as he walked into the trial room first.

"It's fine for now..." the bespectacled man's glasses shone in the light, "if a war was to start now, they would still need us."

Reiner blinked wordlessly as he tried to call out for him as the doors closed, pondering why they had been said in such a way, not as a prediction but like a certainty.

---

**The Next Day – Medals Procedure**

‘*I won't ever sacrifice Historia's life.*’

Eren wondered when he made that declaration in the past. Perhaps as they walked through the orphanage, or in the cave, or maybe even before that on the day they had sat together by the table.

At whatever point he had made that promise along the way, his mind had not changed once.

Along with Armin and Mikasa… Historia at some point had taken a portion inside that had been empty after three of his comrades had left.

Or perhaps that space had been there already since the start.

As time passed and he was kneeling down before her once more, he realised just how her presence had grown larger within him.

He thought it was maybe now more than ever since she was the one in danger here if the way to use the Founding Titan was discovered.

Because of that, she had become such a central part to him.

‘… No, even if she wasn't the one in the worst spot, I would still...’ Eren thought that after returning to the Walls.

Somehow, he felt difficult when talking to Armin and Mikasa. He wanted to tell them as well, but any risk kept holding him back when it was with Historia's life.

Her hand extended through the darkness, like he felt she would do so again in the future.

As he cupped it in his hand once more, he felt her skin vaguely respond.

Resting comfortably in a familiar way as his head lowered to her.

He stared at her skin once more, recalling the last time he had kissed her hand first before anyone else.

The remaining Survey Corps members were forming two rows before the throne of the Queen as they all had knelt down and bowed while waiting for her to move to them.

It was a courtesy and tradition. The brunet wondered if the truth was revealed, how much meaning this customary pledge of loyalty held in actual value.

Between humanity and sacrifice, his mind feared of how easily this all would be forgotten.

His lips pressed against the skin of a girl who he would never sacrifice.
Nothing was shown to him.

Unlike last time, his lips touched her skin, when he saw the storm of memories that he still had to figure, nothing happened this time.

Placing down his hand, he lowered his head and kept his face straight, without revealing anything.

He waited for a moment. Historia's hand didn't move from how she had held it out to him.

Eren slowly lifted his head as he saw her expression. Her lips were shaking as she tried to hide her eyes from him, only then snapping back into movement as she turned her back on him.

His mouth fell apart a little, unable to ask her here as he noticed the others around him glancing at him before returning away, not thinking anything of the sudden halt she had made.

Then he saw the lighter blue eyes still staring at them.

---

**A Few Days Later - Survey Corps Base**

The nine cups of fragrant tea had been placed all around the table at which they all sat around, the entirety of the Survey Corps now gathered around.

The new commander, straightened her glasses and didn't talk for a while as she sat with the cup to her lips, slowly letting the liquid sip in between her lips at a dragged out silence.

It continued for half an hour with nobody talking. The only other remaining captain that sat directly besides her folded his legs and tapped his fingers on the table without urging on his long time comrade.

Hanji sighed as she stared into the cap, slightly seeing her reflection from the liquid on the top, filtered through the window.

"So..." She spoke at last, "... As you can all tell, the Survey Corps as it is now cannot function properly any longer. No, even besides that..."

With the attained knowledge from the past expedition, their objective and way forward was now uncertain.

"Oi, there's no point in dragging this out. We'll assemble later once you've cleared your head," Levi tried to step in, about to issue the abrupt end in support of the new commander.

"No, it's fine. Sorry... everyone," the goggled veteran straightened up and began proper, "well... for now we'll all be on standby. Right now, I haven't organized how we'll operate onwards, however our next step is clearing out the remaining Titans within the walls and then, we'll be moving to secure the entirety of the land on this 'island' in which we live on."

The people in the room nodded to the still relatively unfamiliar word to most of them. For most of them, it was still taking time to process all the new information.

While sitting in between Armin and Mikasa, Eren stared continuously at the wooden table, sorting out through the memories as they all seemed to point to a general trend.

"Of course however, now that winter is near, we won't be making a move until the snow falls and
"passes," Hanji continued, "so-

"So, we'll just be leaving it to Pixis, right?" The captain seemed to put his foot down, glancing sideward. "Let the garrison take over from here. We don't have to do anything right now."

The new commander nodded slowly, "that is to say... Yes, it's as Levi says, we don't have to do anything right now. Now that we've reclaimed Wall Maria, this all falls under the jurisdiction of the Garrison commanders. Of course we'll be cooperating further in establishing security around the whole island in the future... but right now, everyone here will be compensated over the coming months and off duty. Eren of course, even now we shouldn't let our guard down as long as you remain their prime target... but, there's not much need of that right now."

"Commander..." Jean spoke out, "in this coming future... about the people outside the walls, is there... any point we'll serve as soldiers meant to fight Titans?"

"Nothing's been decided yet," Captain Levi answered in her stead, "as you can see, we're all in a shitty mess that we haven't figured a way of washing our hands clean of yet."

"... Yes sir," the light brunet accepted the reply and went quiet. Turning his mind back to the revolution a few months back, he frowned back at it as did the two next to him.

Just as before, he had accepted to kill Titans, not humans. But in order to do that, he accepted order had to be changed, and had killed for that sake.

"Then... Why... are you in the Survey Corps?"

The voice of the recently deceased comrade was recalled in his head as he felt doubt once more.

The movements in the room concluded, as they all sat with little purpose and prospect for the future.

"Well, for Armin at least, we'll have you test and experiment with our newly acquired power," Hanji turned to the blond that remained quiet. "I'll schedule some time to go over things as I did with Eren and test your own abilities as well."

The Colossal Titan shifter nodded agreeingly before glancing to his side in concern at his friend. Sasha then raised a hand to which Hanji nodded.

"So, can I go visit my pa right now?" The huntress confirmed, her body still feeling weak after having been hit.

"Yes, that's fine," Hanji nodded, standing up and pushing her chair back in as Levi did the same next to her, intent on following her, "I'll issue you all temporary leave now if those of you who still have families wish to visit."

Stopping once more she placed her hand as she examined the faces of her seven seated subordinates. While Levi remained his usual self on the exterior, she noticed the signs of uncertainty that matched hers, and a silent anger remaining at the one he failed to kill.

All of their juniors were quiet, uncertain feelings bubbling beneath them as she struggled with how to deal with them. Seven subordinates whose names she all knew, all the remaining members of the lead organizations whom she could count of her fingers.

"I'm sure... that all of you will be struggling and thinking about what happens next," the commander addressed her subordinates, "the result we have achieved, what you've all endured to
make it to this point, the far off struggle left to complete... I'll formulate a plan to move forward, but for now please give us time. Whether you continue as soldiers of this regiment or wish to leave... You've all made a contribution to everyone living within the walls. As the Survey Corps, that will remain our goal, so... I ask that you give me time to decide how to proceed."

The room nodded after a while to their commander, just as lost as they all were in this time.

"Now, any more questions?" Hanji asked, preparing to leave before the bald soldier raised his hand, "Connie?"

"… Can I go to the bathroom yet?"

---

**Early Winter of the Year 850 – Royal Palace**

Taking another sip and emptying a cup of the tea, Historia paced around the room as she placed the letter from Ymir back into the box and then shutting the lid.

After another look had been taken at it, it was returned to her and she placed it for safekeeping, not too worried given it's contents but not wishing for any of her maids to glance upon it accidentally when cleaning.

The window was still open besides the table she returned to, the cold air helping her clear her head a little before she walked over about to shut it.

"… Hm?" The blonde blinked a little, at that moment a squirrel ran along and stopped on the windowsill directly before her outside the open window.

It made no attempts to run into the room and simply twitched it's nose at her silently, not seeming afraid of her as it rotated around.

She smiled and returned to the table, watching the small little thing stalk around a little before she picked up some nuts she had and placed them on the windowsill.

The grey-brown squirrel instantly sniffed over them and begin biting into them, bringing it's to it's mouth after cupping it's hands.

"How do you even climb so high..." Historia asked aloud with it's reply, now considering the few trees around. She supposed that they would scavenge food from the kitchens elsewhere on the palace grounds but it seemed peculiar for them to be searching on the third floor here.

As she was thinking so, another squirrel suddenly joined it, running along the same ledge that the previous squirrel had come from.

She smiled a little before going over slowly and handing them a biscuit after she broke it into small chunks for them to nibble into.

Historia sat back down at the table, a couple of squirrels for company after picking up the pot of tea that she lowered to her empty cup.

'They are so friendly...' she noticed as they shared everything without fighting and seemed to be partners of some sort.

While inclining the kettle pot, aligning the nozzle to her cup, she continued watching the two animals.
As their noses touched in a sudden peck, as though acting out a kiss.

Her whole body froze suddenly and her eyes twisted on the spot as she saw that they even brought out tongues to lick each other’s faces for a second before disappearing.

The sudden stop from freezing her hand was just enough to cause the kettle to shake as the top of the lid popped off at the same time as the hot water inside lurched upwards and flew out of both ends in a flash.

The still hot tea splattered across the table sheets, flowed out the cup and landed on her dress as well, breaking the Queen from her brief frozen state as she jumped from the burning liquid.

"AIIE!" She jumped up, moving away from the steaming liquid that messed up the table and watched to the window as the frightened squirrels disappeared instantly. "No waiit! Don't leave!"

She sighed and jumped again to her surprise as the instant hammering of the guards on the other side had heard her for once as she gave them permission to enter before they soon left after seeing what happened.

Moving to the edge of the windowsill, she pouted and the remaining crumps they had left before sticking her head outside, glancing down either side of the narrow ledge which they run along, long gone.

Sighing softly, she looked at the table, the small pile of papers that had needed to be done this morning, soaked as she picked it up on the cover and shook some off, glancing at it again.

She needed to organise the special celebration in a few weeks for the accomplishments of the Survey Corps.

Eren's face entered her mind, most specifically was imagining his rough yet sweet lips. Her heart beat a little faster, imagining what it would be like to kiss them.

Her hand gripped the table edge, reminded of the sound of the ringing bells and the ceaseless ticking of clocks that she could not slow.

---

**Early Winter of the Year 850 – Celebration at Mithras**

The many carriages lined up caused an issue when it came to finding a place to leave the two which they had taken.

Candlelights were lit across the street as the open space was filled with people despite night descending already.

The celebration was being carried outside all night and for the next day as well, the road all the way from Mithras back down to Trost was filled from all the people from the wealthy to the middle and the poor.

"It's like the people of the interior and outer walls have been united..." Armin's eyes sparkled happily, seeing the unity held in the full motion.

"Hey, so why do we have to dress up like this?" Connie scoffed, pressing a hand beneath his collar of the suit which felt uncomfortable to him.

"It can’t be helped, this is how people on the interior dress up," Jean reminded him, a little red in
the face as he glanced towards Mikasa, considering the prospects of her accepting a dance with him.

Her dark dress that had been sent to her from a family in Trost was simple yet she looked stunning in it as far as Jean was concerned.

At the same time, Sasha was likewise in a dark brown dress herself. She had returned with it after visiting her father, the slightly culture fixed patterns on the edge.

"Hm? What are you lookin' at Jean?" Sasha's suspicious eyes pierced him after he had been glancing between his two female comrades.

"None of you!" Jean stumbled his words and splattered awkwardly when Mikasa glanced art him, "I-I mean none of your business!"

"Tch, don't do anything dumb here," the captain chided them, staring specifically at Connie and Sasha before nodding to Jean to keep an eye on them.

"Well, it can't be helped," the commander lead them in from the carriages, having stubbornly remained in a suit after refusing to wear the dresses presented to her. "The previous awards ceremony was more professional. This is for us to be acknowledged and to make connections if you so wish. And of course it's a celebration for everyone."

Some of them perked up at hearing that while Levi seemed unimpressed. "Whatever, just don't get carried away here."

They all entered the room as the guests of honour were announced.

Somehow the moment they all arrived, they understood now why captain Levi seemed prepared for something. A swarm of people flocked to him instantly, interviewers and both male and female fans circled around him.

"Ah… should we help him?" Jean stepped closer to Hanji, already unable to see him from his height, though they call all vaguely hear his unamused voice.

"He'll be fine," Hanji laughed softly, waving him off as another man approached her. "Ah, it's Randolf right?"

"A pleasure, 14th commander," the man shook her hand after nodding, "I would just like to inform you that her Majesty is running late however, so we'll have to wait a little."

Eren looked around to the full hall, everyone chatting and trying to converse with each other. 'She wouldn't want to get involved with this.' Eren thought.

"It's not a problem for us," Hanji answered before turning back to the group waiting for her, "ah, you guys can do anything you like. We'll be here for most of the night, just don't leave until the Queen's addressed us, and tell either me or Levi if you really need to leave."

They all nodded at her and dispersed slowly while Hanji got distracted with talking to other officials. Floch looked around a little, before strolling past Eren, remaining quiet as he had been since he spoke against Armin.

Sasha instead began leading the remaining group to one of the food tables which they had to stop her from jumping directly onto as she began picking up everything she could find and having a taste.
The other followed her, picking up things to try as well while some people stopped by to talk with them and a few took an interest of watching them.

Eren gazed around, feeling the stares and glances thrown at him. It wasn't like before when he was hated and feared for his Titan power, but a similar feeling began welling up while he stood behind Armin and Mikasa who were likewise enjoying the food fair.

Glancing around further, Eren sighed before stepping away and wandering on his own a little. The room was massive and fit a few hundred people that Eren had to slide past until he reached the wall.

After following a little, he found a pair of open doors which he exited from, feeling the fresh air at last.

The night air wasn't too comfortable now that winter was here but he much preferred it to the stuffiness inside as he pulled down his tie and opened up a few buttons.

While leaning on the outside wall, not far away from the doors inside, he heard someone declaring that the Queen had arrived.

A little while later, she began giving a recited speech that didn't allow her to reveal her true feelings, which Eren listened to for a while before it faded away in his ears and he began counting the stars instead.

Little glimmers of starlight sparked in various intensities, some of them forming patterns which Eren had heard about though still struggled to see sometimes.

The small lights, each filled with life.

It was like a glimpse of something he had seen.

The paths that all traveled along the sky, meeting at one point, at the coordinate.

His green eyes could not discern any line traveling in the sky like he had seen after kissing Historia's hand.

Instead the moon shone brightly, almost like the only thing out of place despite it's waning gibbous shape being a natural sight here.

The one feature which seemed different from what he saw in the memories of his father.

A quiet applause began ringing out as the Queen had finished speaking. Eren didn't want to hear her words, he wanted to hear Historia's true feelings only.

'If she comes down in a little, I can go find her...' Eren decided to wait a while, glancing inside as music began playing and a dance group was forming as couples began lining up and other people began asking them to dance.

Walking further away from the outside, he approached the railing of the extended balcony, staring down at the courtyard below in the night, recognizing it as one of the places which he and Historia had wandered about before the expedition.

Noticing a pair of guards marching at ease, he stepped back a little and leaned over one of the corners, closer to the walls, noticing some little pond there from which a couple of trees were growing out of.
His hand gripped the new shirt that he wore, feeling the cold metal that he was still carrying. Taking out the string he pulled it off his neck.

"Oh," Eren looked, seeing that he had pulled out the sachet, contained the sunstone which glittered from the moonlight before tugging out the other string from his neck, lifting the weight off it as he attached the crystal back over his neck.

The key to the basement.

It's use had been fulfilled, and it's value now nothing.

He clenched it in his fist before extending it out in his hand over the railing. The pond below it wasn't deep but it wouldn't be easy to find again.

Nobody who came across it would know that it had been the key which unlocked the recent truth.

Even if they did, it wouldn't serve any purpose.

With that being so, he wondered why he still had it.

It had only been a week since the expedition, but after many years of keeping it close, he struggled to leave it somewhere else now.

Taking a breath, he turned his hand downwards, looking down at the downwards trajectory.

His hand opened and the key was let go of at last.

"… Ah," Eren blinked as it remained dangling, the string caught onto his fingers and twirled around, not wishing to let go.

He unpeeled it with a frown, this time, holding the string on his fingers as he let the metal key weigh it down, as it slipped bit by bit.

It flicked over his nails a little before falling.

"Eh…?" The key remained dangling still not having fallen.

The string was caught by the small hand of the blonde girl that stepped in besides him.

She caught his green eyes in a stare while looking at him to say something.

"If you don't want to let it go, then don't," she told him, pulling it up and holding the key in her other hand and took a single pace away from the railing before turning around at him.

"I was just..." Eren forgot his words while staring at Historia who stretched out the string between her two hands, watching him expectedly. "There's no real point in keeping it is there…? … It's just a past burden now."

"Hm," she nodded before putting her head through the whole and placing the key on her neck, and resting it above her chest where he noticed her own sunstone was still being worn despite the deep red dress that she looked electrifying in. "Well, it seems like it's still a burden to you… The same with any other burdens you might have… you can always share them with me..."

"… Did you come here right after finishing the speech?" The Titan shifter asked her, not having heard anyone behind him.
"Yeah, which you clearly didn't listen to," she smiled, not minding one bit, "somehow… I just knew you'd be here…"

The empty balcony that was still nearby. A place where nobody else could see him yet the would have a clear view of the night sky. There were at least half a dozen other places connected to the room with similar such balconies, yet she was somehow guided to this one while slipping at the side of the wall, doing her best to not be seen.

"Hm… it's heavier than I thought," the young Queen muttered before denying his attempt, "I'm still holding onto it if you won't. But this surely must be trouble to keep on you when you were doing ODM gear training…"

He had been carrying it for 5 years. Now that it was gone, he suddenly noticed how much lighter his neck seemed to feel.

Her blue eyes approached closer and her hands reached out to feel his fingers, rubbing them softly and waiting for him while he stared at the dull metal, now against her chest.

"Sorry, it's been a week but I've not been to see you," apologizing for a little, Historia shook her head. "… Alright… but… promise never to tell anyone no matter who…"

"I promise..." Her blue eyes swore the oath and he began to tell her everything from the past week.

"I promise… someday I will rescue you...?" Historia repeated the last words, piquing her head.

Eren stared at her, and nodded before telling her about it, one of the things that he had left out without reporting. As far as everyone else knew, the Beast Titan user had simply tried to question him before Captain Levi had shown up seconds later and he had fled. His identity was known but Eren revealed nothing towards it.

"… Yeah, so he said..." The brunet shrugged while leaning on the rail next to her as she waited for him to continue. "There's… nothing I can do anyway. He's with the enemy after all… even if he wasn't, I don't know if I could trust him..."

"… Perhaps..." Her soft gaze doubted him, asking why he then kept this hidden. "It's funny… we're similar like that as well… one day, we see the memories, we suddenly find out that we both had an elder half-sibling we didn't know about..."

Eren nodded slightly, "yeah, that's right but… compared to Frieda who was there for you in the past, there's nothing like that between us. How… could I possibly trust him… But, he's a Titan shifter with royal blood."

He had hesitated before telling her. The reason why he was hiding the way to use the Founding Titan if they did so both as Titans. Worrying that she would only been inclined to do so if he told her, he hadn't wanted to.

Somehow he felt if it had been at a different time, he would have been able to keep quiet about it. But seeing her eyes, he became unable to hide the truth from her here.

"… Don't worry, I said I won't tell anyone right?" She tried to reassure him but couldn't deny the sudden thoughts to her head. Right now however, there was no way for her to consume Titan spinal fluid in the known way.
'But if the chance presented itself...' she had already began thinking, 'me and Eren... together we could...' 

"Don't..." Eren gazed at her sadly, seeing the thoughts in her head. It was exactly what he didn't want her to think of. "I don't want you to do such a thing... If you did, then I'd..."

"Sorry, I promise I won't then if you don't want me to." She did her best to reassure him while seeing his pained eyes at her. "It's just hard not to think about it right now... but it's fine, there's no way it can happen right now. And nobody else knows besides us right?"

"..." The green eyed shifter nodded, "there's no point in you turning into a Titan anyway. If... I can somehow figure out some way to leverage against this Zeke... I could maybe deal with the enemy's key forefront fighter and find a way to use the Founding Titan's power."

"Alright..." She nodded at him, asking him knowingfully, "do you truly not feel anything about the fact that he's your half-brother?"

"...There's nothing that I can do... so long as we're enemies..." The memories of his father seemed to conflict a little. The wish to make up with the son he had left behind. It was impossible to complete. Yet it felt like something already accomplished.

The memories of the time he kissed Historia's hand flickered. The memories from his father.

'It was inside the walls... how could it be that... he was here 5 years ago...' Eren wondered if he was mistaken about the bearded man's identity, perhaps some different relative. "...At the awards ceremony... when I kissed your hand... did you..."

"Yeah, I've been meaning to tell you about it, and..." The blue eyed girl nodded, trying to put it into words. "When you were away/.. recovering Wall Maria, a strange thing happened when I was at the orphanage..."

This time, she told him everything.

"Ymir... Fritz..." The name of the progenitor, uncovered in the earliest history of the Eldian empire.

Nothing was known about her besides speculation and the interpreted texts of either side of her.

"You believe... that was who you might have seen?" Eren asked, feeling sickened by the story she had just told.

The blonde shivered a little, and skipped certain details and feeling the visible anger in her that resonated with his own.

It reminded him a lot of the past. When Mikasa had been taken by the kidnappers and just like them, he took their freedom away in their stead.

"It's just a guess... perhaps I'm completely wrong, but... that's just something I feel." She grasped the handle, "the girl I saw a week ago... she felt quite different but... she had the same feeling to her as well... it could just be someone else..."

He frowned at the strange story, wondering why Historia would have seen such a thing. They hadn't been connected at all, so the coordinate should not have been active.
The story of a girl who had everything taken away from her one day and punished for someone else's joy. And the girl who told a story very different to it.

"I don't know how they are connected at all… I guess… we can only wait and see if something else strange like that happens," Historia spoke, wandering how she could have had such a strange daydream, different to the memories. Gazing upon the skies, she sighed. "… Being Queen like this, now seems to hold even less value than I thought…"

"… That's not your fault. You've done a great job already." Eren leaned next to her while they both stared past the darkened skyline they couldn't see. "It was just… the world was bigger and full of more threats that we could have thought."

It was known that the warriors had come from beyond the wall, the hometown which Reiner and Bertholdt had spoken of, where Annie's father must be.

Besides this settlement however, they had believed themselves to be the only ones left in a Titan covered world that turned out only to be this island now.

"On the other side of the wall…" She couldn't see it, but she felt it wasn't so unfamiliar. "… I'm sure there's people like us as well… those who feel they have no place and that there's no point in their existence… if it was just this island, I feel I could help change it over time… to make it a Paradise where everyone at least had a place to belong if nothing more…"

She wasn't a true Queen, but her position was the best in contributing to such an ideal. It had been merely a wish to her, likely impossible to ever accomplish as she realised reality to her position and the fatigue that overtook her upon seeing it.

"But… Beyond the ocean, they are in a place I can't reach out to them… even just in name, now we know that I'm not Queen of 'Humanity'. Rather… I would be seen as a Queen of Demons beyond there…" She thought sadly, actually liking the sound of the name but not too positive of the impression she would want to make. "… It's not that I regret becoming Queen, at least some of the children that have been taken in are better now… but…"

"… It's a step forward right? What you've accomplished is already a leap from the old government." He held her hand. She felt strength stirring in her, deep within like usual. "… You know… if we could do the same thing… if we could overthrow Marley's leaders and take over without obstruction, we could make you Queen on both this island and the continent."

"Oh?" Historia smirked at him, seeing him lightly joke at her. "If we stage a massive Titan, only bigger than last time, and have me defeat it, maybe the populace outside the world would accept me as well."

"Yeah, I'll create a massive Titan form of myself and pretend to lose to you so that you're their saviour," Eren smiled down at her. "Bring a chair this time so people can see you."

"Why would I do that, my noble steed? I can just sit on you and ride you like a horsey," she grinned. "Instead of just destroying their enemy, the Founding Titan, I can train him as my pet instead."

"So long as you treat me well, I won't mind," Eren felt himself blushing a little, the scene almost too suited in his mind. "If it's with you, I want to go anywhere."

He wandered why he had been so down recently.

The enemy was driven out and the Titans would be exterminated.
After that, he would reach the ocean and past it, where the freedom he desired existed.

Despite his dream, it felt like something he had already given up long ago while in the company of his blonde friend.

His heart ached and his body tired. Almost empty again and afraid to become like he had once done so back in the cave,

When that happened, it had been Historia to save him.

Almost as if trying to find something else to cling on as his dream was on the verge of rotting away. Almost as if trying to have the girl save him once again and share his burden just as she accepted.

The feeling inside him was complicated.

Like something he was trying to deny.

Threatening his whole identity, it defied him, trying to help him survive.

His revenge was gone.

His dream was gone.

His comrades were gone.

Not wanting his whole self to disappear, the abnormal feeling tried to desperately hold onto something because he had nothing else left.

Beyond the walls… Freedom which he sought for didn't exist.

His dream didn't exist.

Without it, what else did he have?

That was what the feeling seemed to say.

The words began fumbling out without question as the feeling tried to latch onto something to keep him alive.

"… Anywhere?" The blue eyes blinked, the small blush creeping up on her, "you… the way you just said that..."

"Yeah, anywhere with you." Eren's green eyes shown without hesitation. "I want to stay with you, Historia."

"Gha?!" She jumped suddenly, face hot and uncoolable by night. "You… You're saying… n-no… this is a dream..."

Laughing awkwardly failed, as she scratched her cheek and glanced at him, still looking serious.

"I mean it, Historia." Eren's hands cupped hers. "You want to be together with me as well right?"

"E-Eh?! Y-Yes… no," she shook her head while calming herself, the blush unable to be removed now when he was so close. "… Let me say it..."
Taking a deep breath, Eren didn't let go of her once and as he held a bizarre sense of purpose in him.

"Yes… I want to be with you…" Her blue eyes spoke without worry, her heart somehow calming down despite her head expecting it to beat crazy. "I want to stay together-together with you…"

After saying that, the two stayed like for a while, in a difficult silence.

"…" Eren's blush began intensifying.

"…" Historia's heart beat rapidly.

"… A-Are you saying then..." Eren pulled away one hand while scratching awkwardly. "… You… me… like…"

"… I… yeah… you… thing…" Historia stammered likewise, suddenly an embarrassed feeling wanting her to run away.

"W-What I mean to say..." Eren's knees became weak, unable to properly express himself here, "I… I-like…. Like..."

A big cheer run out inside and a celebration toast seemed to have began, disturbing them, suddenly conscious that people were moving around.

To their bad luck, a couple suddenly strolled outwards, as Eren and Historia dropped their hands and took a small distance away, the moment interrupted and gone already if it hadn't been before.

"Oh, pardon me," the gentlemen noticed them to the side as his wife kept a fan over her face, "we didn't mean to interrupt. The balcony seemed empty."

"I-Interrupt…?" Historia addressed them, "y-you do not have to worry, you are not interrupting anything between us."

"Ara, but aren't you two a couple?" the lady inquired, noticing the dress which the blonde girl was wearing. "Oh, are you not her Majesty herself?"

Her husband noticed suddenly, and they both bowed apologetically slightly.

"T-There's no need," the Queen tried to reassure them, "I was just… catching up with a friend."

"Y-Yeah, there's nothing like that between us," Eren added suspiciously, "we were… just leaving."

The moment he said that, Eren paced off quickly, his body heated up to a difficult level as Historia bowed slightly to the couple and reassured them, before leaving sensibly, and then making a little jog towards Eren as soon as she disappeared inside again as well.

"Hey, you," Historia grabbed his arm while they both hid along the wall. "I've got… we've both got something to say..."

"… Not here," Eren shook his head, wanting to leave after just being almost caught, just after preparing to confess. He wondered if the interruption was perhaps fortunate and if he could have actually spoken his true feelings with the uncomfortable place here.

Historia nodded, not in the mood for this place either. "… Grab a carriage to the orphanage. I'll follow half an hour after so we're not seen together. We'll both arrive just before dawn."
Inside the Palace

While moving around the tables, they had noticed Eren had disappeared soon after the Queen's customary speech, thanking them of their sacrifices and continued service.

"Armin," the blond turned to see Mikasa calling him, "have you seen Eren?"

He shook his head, "sorry, I haven't."

The way she moved showed some wish to dance as the soothing music kept playing on the dance floor where many people had gathered now, moving in a generally fluid motion along with some apologies and laughs mixed in.

Armin looked around once more for his fellow Titan shifter, glancing through each crowd.

"So you're saying instead of that commander Erwin, some kid got the Titan power?!!" The crowd of well dressed men attracted his attention instead as they discussed among themselves.

"Yes that is correct," the middle man continued, "for that reason, Eren Jaeger was imprisoned for a short time when he refused to give up on him after the Captain ordered him down."

The group around kept diving deeper into the discussions while sharing drinks that were handed to them by their personal butlers and maids.

"Tch, guess he is still just a brat."

"Well he is still young, we should not ignore that Wall Maria was retaken thanks to him."

"When you put it that way, should we not be more concerned about this new Titan of ours. I bet he will be a complete disaster no matter how we slice it."

"I am further concerned if this may continue next time. We just had a young Queen take the throne, I worry if simple recruits are going to start taking all the power."

"At least the Queen is not causing us too much trouble, she's not making any immature demands and lazing around like the past fake kings."

"Indeed, this is a question of handing down another Power of the Titans to some rookies. What troubles me is that Captain Levi made the choice in the end."

"Seriously? Maybe it's the leaders of the Survey Corps making senseless decision that we should worry for."

"True, however Humanity's Strongest... or well now, our strongest soldier has made excellent contributions as well."

"We should just prepare for the failures of this new holder of the Colossal Titan already."

The talk was still spreading slowly around the room between groups who knew each other, within he interior and would soon surely be widespread news to all the common people that would be spoken of for a while.

Armin shook a little, trying to look busy with something else when he froze. Mikasa's face was darkly livid, threatening to burst and charge at them.

"M-Mikasa, please don't do anything!" Armin urged her, whispering to her closely as he tried to
calm her down. "Just ignore them..."

"..." The glare of her grey eyes pierced them. The blond wouldn't feel surprised if they all suddenly were set on fire from it. "... They should bite their tongues already."

Armin breathed out a sign of relief when Mikasa turned away with a stomp.

"... They don't know anything about you." His black haired friend seethed beneath her breath, the anger not disappeared from her cold eyes.

"It's fine," he reassured her, hiding the doubt which was shot back at him. "This was to be expected."

Captain Levi had warned them about it beforehand and had especially spoken to his two friends to contain themselves.

Mikasa gritted her teeth, holding back from not kicking all the men who were still absorbed in the matter. If it wouldn't have damaged the Survey Corps's image, she would have done so already.

However she dreaded to think if retaliating like this would only cause the opinions of Armin to become worse.

Silently instead, the two friends moved across the room together while keeping an eye out for their childhood friend until they found a quiet spot against the wall on one side of the room after going to a food table and taking a bit of cake and drinks.

"... I don't see Eren anywhere," Armin said after they had handed their empty glasses to a passing waitress. "You don't need to worry about me, Mikasa. You might be able to find him if you go search again."

The black haired girl remained silent, tasting the piece of cake which she didn't let the enjoyment of reach her face.

Her bad mood had not improved after the past hour of glancing at the conversing groups. After Armin saw that, he felt concerned that she would seriously wind up in trouble.

"I'll be back soon," Mikasa narrowed her eyes and answered, locking her targets after hearing someone mention Armin by name with a scoff. "There's something I need to take care of."

Armin grabbed her arm immediately, "Mikasa don't! What are you plan-"

"If I find some powder or dye, I can hide my hair colour." She noticed the doors in and out the kitchen where the waiters and waitresses kept coming from as some people stood by the side and were making personal requests that were brought to them.

"A disguise like that would be discovered easily! Your features and dress will standout way too much and can be discovered..." Armin held her in place as she looked down dejectedly but remained next to him.

She continued frowning as Armin looked for way to distract her before holding out the remaining cake in his other hand. "Try some, it's really good."

Mikasa looked down and took it in her hand before eating it angrily, her blond friend sighing at the vicious way she devoured it.
"..." Mikasa breathed for a little, "... It is tasty."

Armin smiled a little, happy when thinking how Mikasa seemed to express herself like this more.

"You as well," she said, realising she still had a bit of her own different kind of cake left after she had taken Armin's.

"Oh," Armin thanked her before taking a bite, the palace food so much more exquisite to them both. "It's good."

Mikasa nodded along as they returned to a comfortable silence.

They noticed a small commotion happening as a group of three were crushing into each other and around the place.

While Sasha was grabbing the food on the tables around em, as well as sometimes from people's plates instantly, Connie and Jean held onto either of her arms as eh were dragged along with her.

Armin smiled a little at them, seeing Connie dazed from spinning, still managing to hold on and do an awkward dance with his two friends as Jean kept declaring he was done with them before Sasha closed his mouth by stuffing food in him.

"Oh yeah, maybe you can ask Jean for a dance?" Armin prodded, knowing the light brunet's feelings. They still had seen no sign if Eren for the past couple hours. "At least until Eren shows up, I don't think he'll mind if you dance with Jean."

"... I think he looks happy with Sasha and Connie right now," Mikasa's expression softened as she watched Jean hold Sasha away when an older gentleman had asked, pulling Connie away with them.

Armin nodded ahead, watching Sasha not notice and embrace her true love at the potato and meat tables before the three disappeared in the crowd again.

"Thanks Mikasa," the blond began again, "you really don't have to worry about me. Nobody is talking about it anymore, I shouldn't hold you back from enjoying yourself as well."

Mikasa frowned at him in doubt, knowing full well he was still going to hear words spoken against him. "... 'As well'?"

"Ah well..." Armin gulped a little when he saw Mikasa face him. She appeared both angry and sad at him suddenly. "I mean..."

"You're not a burden. Haven't I told you I've never considered you like that," Mikasa turned away instead, as Armin tried to think of a way to apologise again. "... I'm the that you should be angry at."

"... What?" The Titan shifter searched her figure in confusion.

"... I'm sorry." Her body shivered slightly as her arms held herself. "I'm sorry."

"M-Mikasa... Are you..." Armin reached around, trying to search for a handkerchief before her grey eyes rooted him to the spot.

"It's alright. I'm not crying." Mikasa wiped the obvious wetness in her light skin. "... It's just as Floch says... I... when Hanji spoke to me I... really did give up on you."
"... That would... have been the right decision..." He reassured his friend. "In that situation, I'd have given up on me..."

"... And? If I had been in your position, would you have given up on me?" His stomach twisted into a knot, unable to reply from this angle. "No matter what... Eren didn't give up, unlike me... You... were the right choice to save for me. But even so..."

Armin reached out and stopped as he waited for a minute until Mikasa began breathing normally again before he spoke.

"No matter what... There's no way I'd blame you for that..." Struggling to continue, he hoped that at least could be conveyed to her, "... Mikasa, you and Eren... You'll always be my best friends... after all that's happened... we're still friends right?"

Mikasa nodded simply, her hand moving over her cheeks again.

"Mnh, it's a promise then?" He extended his hand towards her, "the three of us will always be friends no matter what."

Her fingers reached out to his hand took it, shaking it slowly. "... It's a promise.

Armin smiled happily at her as he pulled away, only for Mikasa to keep hold of his hand. "... Mikasa...?"

The passing ladies next to them brought up his name as he glanced over. Hearing them discuss him as the new Titan shifter.

"Even if you forgive me as you do... it won't change that I let you go back then..." Her expression tried to settle the interior conflict. Her hand held his tightly. "I won't let you go again like that."

Armin wordlessly watched as she swore this promise as well. "... Thank you."

The words brewing around the, continued as Armin felt the doubts and disbelief directed at him continue in the silence with his friend.

Her presence telling him not to let a single word they said get to him and that she would remain at his side, not faltering once just as she promised.

The two stood together, catching sight of Jean, Sasha and Connie still in a triangle dance together.

A few moments later, the music changed again, as dance partners switched again.

"When Eren comes back, we'll all dance together like that," Mikasa nodded as Armin hummed in agreement though they had been unable to spot him since the start. "For now..."

"Ah...?" Mikasa pulled him with her arm, as Armin muttered wordlessly, following her lead as she began stepping with specific feet movements without letting go.

The blond followed her tune as the two friends entered a slow dance at the side of the hall.

---

**Early Winter of the Year 850 – Wall Sina Orphanage**

After being dropped off, the brunet shifter walked through the familiar meadow, his hand sliding across the wooden fence.
The children would still be asleep for now and it was a comforting place regardless. He felt he should be tired as well, but the world kept him more awake than ever.

It had only been a few hours since he left the capital, wishing he could have had at least a few days to sort out his feelings and what he would actually say.

"… You look beautiful." His one true thought fell out, unable to be stopped.

Historia had as promised, arrived about half an hour later, already changed out of her dress and into her countryside dress with her shoulder cape tied loosely in a knot in front of her.

A simply honest real girl.

Historia blushed, her whole confidence, which she had built up while walking towards him, thrown into oblivion.

Here however, her heart was able to reform while nodding thankfully as he had taken up a lamp in hand.

"You didn't think anything of my other dresses then..." she commented softly while taking his hand and leading him to a nearby storage shed.

"Ah well..." Eren considered pointing out the fact she looked great in whatever she wore but decided to leave the words hang.

As they entered through the door, Historia shuffled around before finding candles which Eren lit after opening the candle he had brought from the carriage driver.

After a little while, they had lit a dozen of them and placed them around the room to illuminate the interior properly.

While moving around, Eren knew his feelings had already been decided. He struggled to say it, but he understood what his feelings were for Historia.

As blue and green met each other, the shared feelings reassured each other.

They stood together in the small wooden hut, not much space for the two of them together, two doors at right angles to each other of the partially curved, 'L' shape shed.

There were two tables just besides either door which they had left a couple candles each on while they both leaned against the walls, meeting at the corners, their feet touching each other at a right angle.

"..."

"..."

With nobody around them, they felt no need to rush. The setting was far more suitable to them, where nobody besides the other could see them right now, out in the country and away fro their roles and responsibilities.

Neither however could feel quite calm, unable to bring their words into confession first. At this point they were aware.

A special feeling for each other, somehow changing form and moving in a similar wave to how a couple would be around each other.
While staring at her soft, gentle looking lips, Eren struggled to hold back. The feeling of running away remained. Almost scared by something unnatural.

Historia pressed her knees together gently, noticing him. The affection that she longed for was clear. There was no doubts holding her back any more,

Even so, the two didn't know how to begin.

A confession of love.

A part of them asked if it was really needed.

They were somehow sure of what the other was trying to say.

Yet an invisible barrier seemed to stop them.

Some kind of difficulty in stating the words aloud clearly.

The green eyed boy wandered how difficult it had been in the past for the girl to understand the concept of it. How unable she was to express it. That she hadn't said it once in Frieda's memories that he had seen.

The blue eyed girl always recalled the memories of the boy's childhood to herself strangely. His mother had spoken such words to him. The boy hadn't. It was only when it was too late did he realize he would never be able to.

It was all in an unchangeable past.

A wall they had to destroy, a chain they had to break.

Realizing it, they both felt determination in order to overcome it.

"I –" They both began at the same time and stopped immediately, staring at each, neither budging to go first. "...

"... A moment," Historia said before turning around and moving to one corner of the shed.

"Yeah," Eren complied and did so to the other, now unable to see each other, though able to hear each other's movements easily from nearby as they rubbed their own faces and clapped their cheeks.

While rethinking as well, they tried to form out what they would say.

"I love you."

Besides asking to officially court each other, that was all they officially wished to say. Which order should they be said in? Was one or the other needed or did both need to be said? Knowing the other, neither needed to be spoken and they could just begin courting properly.

While Eren breathed out, he glanced over by the table. His finger became drawn over the rough edge, realising that it was softwood.

The blonde heard her friend – more than friend yet? Was it to soon to consider him as her fiance already? She heard him moving while she scraped a hand over the table where the candle was being lit.
After blinking for a while, a knife and pin was taken out on either end, followed by the scratching noise on the wood.

"H-Historia?" Eren called to her, lips wobbling at the message.

"Y-Yeah?" She answered, hearing footsteps come her way as she moved to block him as well, meeting again at the right angle part, the uneven edge of the shed.

It was too late.

It had had already been written.

Backing out now was impossible.

"… What… I've been… feeling, no thinking… I mean like wanting to say." He grit his teeth in annoyance and glanced down at her rosy face.

The distance made him want to lean down and reach down to her.

"I… uhh…" Historia stumbled again, "do you mind if we took a few moments outside?"

"Ah… yeah," Eren nodded, stepping aside. "Oh, you go out that door we came from and I'll…"

Pointing to the other side door, Historia nodded after taking a breath, stepping around each other, they both walked passed, down either end of the shed.

Historia's hands were on the door just before she heard Eren stop, both listening for each other's movements. They called for each other's names unnecessarily to make sure they were still there.

Only after a while did the brunet notice the candle which was on the table, illuminating something that had been carved on it, just as he had on the other desk.

While both looking at it, they both saw the arranged shape.

The carving of a love heart surrounded with the candle places at the top, it's gentle glow continuing of radiant firelight.

- - - - - -

Mun þú mik,
man ek þík.
Unn þú mér,
ann ek þér.

"Remember me,
I remember you.

Love me,
I love you."
The old poem of naivety in a place of reality.

Óst min, kyss mik
"My darling, kiss me."

The only wish they wanted.
Tied down with the symbol of Freyda, the message was clear.
The old way of confessing one's love from centuries past.
Turning towards the corner, they both paced towards it.

Eren's paces were longer and so he made it first, turning around just as he leaned straight in without hesitation, fulled by only his true desire that told him not to delay any longer.

Historia hopped up a little and lifted on her feet as she grabbed the side of his shirt, steadying him down to meet her.

The gentle warmth was subtly sweet. Their lips pressed against each, squeezed at the contact, compressing inwards as they both pushed into each other.

While sharing the first kiss, both glanced back annoyed at their hesitation.

It spread warmth.

The colliding sensations brought about an intense warmth, like the candle lights that gently warmed the room slightly.

Eren wondered why he had closed his eyes without hesitation and opened them a little, seeing Historia's shut eyelashes, somehow making him insensitively close his own again.

She felt his nose gently touching her, noticing that she had bumped it a little when she had pulled him down but too taken in by the enveloping warmth like a blanket to worry too much about it since Eren hadn't shown any notice of it.

Their lips were ever so slightly at an angle, aligning and pressing against each other in attractive movements, the soft vermilion borders dipping around slightly over the edge and curves of the others.

The thin tissues burnt slightly, melting ever so calmly as the muscles contracted and relaxed between each other, sending the throbbing feeling reminiscent to their aligned heartbeats rushing in unison.

It was real.

And true to their feelings, it conveyed just that.
The lips' prints marking each other, leaving a distinct minuscule pattern that would fade in little time and leave only the feeling of it's imprint.

While one of Historia's hands remained on Eren's jacket, the other cupped his cheek ever so slightly, brushing along his jaw while feeling Eren's own hands both on the back of her head still, her blonde hair tied up was pressed slightly on the back of her head like a cushion.

One of her legs was in between his while the other was moved slightly back, forcing her body to rest up a bit like a weak spring that gave the kiss a bit more force upwards.

Eren's legs were parted, holding his ground easily while remaining close to her, one of his knees gently touching her hips from their height difference.

Eren's prochelion dipped slightly into the middle of her lips, snuggling softly as she felt her own pass over the border before she slid it back so that they touched in the centre again.

The bright white sun dawned on the bonded when they finally pulled apart.

The words were exchanged as they relaxed in each others embrace hugging slightly for a little while.

"… We can't tell anyone about this…” Eren said. "In the future… if people find out then..."

"Yeah, I also think it would be for the better," Historia agreed before smiling up at him, "it'll be our secret."

Eren smiled happily, seeing her in front of him. He didn't know what was telling him it, but if their relationship was revealed in the future, he felt it would only reveal they had worked together.

'If the worst case came to be, Historia must not be found to be connected with me…'

'It'll be fine, no matter what happens, I'll be by your side if you are condemned.'

While their thoughts told them that, they had already pressed their lips together once more, closing the distance as they began brushing through their hair while the other hand rested on the others shoulder.

Their lips kept pressing stronger, deepening it as much as they could.

Red and red, blue and green.

The tips of the two sunstones swaying gently while hanging from their necks, gleamed and reflected light from each other as their strings twirled around the old metal key in the middle, all intertwining together.

The sun was unable to be stopped from rising higher.

… And we're proper relationship now! But yeah, confession scene didn't turn out at all how I wanted it… but ahh I just don't know haha, decided to just get it down with lol.

To clarify, instead of Eren seeing what he did after kissing Historia's hand in ch90/end of season 3, Historia instead saw the contents of chapter 122, up to page 10, where Ymir falls into the water. I dunno if this is the case, but wondered about the chapter since we didn’t get the lightning sparks we usually did when we see new memories when Eren reached Ymir. Of
course it was cut out, for whatever reason, but just for the sake of things, Historia is the one here who has seen Ymir's backstory as her descendant.

From which then, Eren had heard about her from Historia and as such doesn't recognize her at the start when he sees her. Of course it could have just been if he saw through her POV memories but never how she looked like and so didn't know, or like before it's just as he was watching through the memories in present time at ch122, but yeah lol, whatever the case is in canon, this clearly didn't occur like in this chapter haha, but yeah for now Historia has just seen the early part of Ymir as a child.

Ending Scene: WARNING MANGA SPOILERS - CONTAINS SPOILERS FOR SEASON 4 (OR WHAT WILL BE SEASON 4 AT LEAST)

"Warrior Reiner Braun." The judge called out his name.

The room was the same as 4 years ago when he had stepped in. The conditions given to him in order to keep the Armoured Titan had only been a means to keep his loyalty pledged.

Only when he had performed above expectations was he reconsideration and summoned back here.

"Due to your efforts at capturing Fort Slava and playing a key role in our victory against the Middle-East Alliance, you will be permitted to serve your remaining 2 years as a warrior."

Reiner didn't reply.

The number meant so little to him now.

Whether it was today or a couple years from now.

There was no reason for him to keep existing even if he was able to.

"However, with you remaining time, you will be serving as the forefront of the invasion of Paradis. Your Armour will be handed to the chosen warrior cadet and you will hand down all your knowledge of the island to them."

They were saying the last battle for him was over and that they had no further use for him while leaving him some remaining time.

All that was left now was training his successor who would be cursed with his power.

Reiner decided it was better if he would die here.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!