

DAMSEL ON A QUEST

OVER BLACK.

SUPER: Long ago, before the mists of magic faded...

**FADE IN:**

EXT. DARK FOREST - NIGHT

A hooded figure, a STRANGER, moves swiftly through the trees, chasing something. She looks up and spots her prey.

Amongst the treetops, a tiny WISP OF LIGHT floats lazily on the breeze. It dips, carried by a downward draft.

Out of the darkness, her CLAWED HAND shoots toward it. The wisp dances just out of reach. Is it caught on the wind - or evading her?

END OF COLD OPEN

EXT. ABBEY - DAY

A well-kept abbey nestled in a country field.

The ABBEY'S SYMBOL, a silhouette of lantern & flame, adorns a modest bell tower.

A heavy GATE leads to a garden courtyard.

INT./EXT. ABBEY COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

The courtyard has washed walls and perfect flowering shrubs, trimmed back. It's not small, but it feels that way.

NUNS, in earthy-green HABITS, watch over LITTLE GIRLS as they laugh and play. Many wear PENDANTS featuring the Abbey symbol.

One voice RINGS OUT over the rest.

REMI (O.S.)  
KNIGHTS! Prepare for battle!

Remi (9, wild curly hair) is wearing her best glower as she stares down a group of fellow 9-year-olds.

They all wield sticks, though some are holding them as if they were worms.

REMI (CONT'D)  
The enemy waits for us, across the  
Emerald Lake!

Remi points across a small, muddy puddle. There's no one on the other side.

REMI (CONT'D)  
We must surprise them, now in the  
dead of the night--

One little girl squints up at the high noon sun.

REMI (CONT'D)  
--we must attack!

Remi TAKES OFF into the puddle, kicking up mud and soaking her shift.

REMI (CONT'D)  
AAAAHHHH!!!

She comes out swinging on the other side, vanquishing imaginary foes with her mighty stick. Then she turns, and STOPS.

She realizes none of the other girls followed her.

REMI (CONT'D)  
C'mon guys, I need your help to  
fight the monsters.

GIRL #1  
But there aren't any monsters.

GIRL #2  
And that puddle is gross.

REMI  
It's not a puddle, it's the *Emerald*  
*Lake*. And there are too monsters!

Girl #1 throws her stick down.

GIRL #1  
Not in the abbey.

The girls start to leave.

REMI  
What about when we leave the abbey?  
We have to be prepared!

GIRL #2  
For what?

REMI  
For- something! Something's gonna  
happen, I know it!

SISTER RANIA (O.S.)  
REMI!

Two nuns, one with a stern face (SISTER RANIA) and one with kind eyes (SISTER AETRIA) approach.

SISTER RANIA (CONT'D)  
What have we told you about playing  
in mud? To the washroom, now!

Remi frowns, and walks off reluctantly, dragging her stick behind her.

SISTER RANIA (CONT'D)  
That girl will come to trouble,  
just like her parents.

SISTER AETRIA

*Sister!*

SISTER RANIA

I'm not washing her frock again.

INT. ABBEY WASHROOM

Wash buckets line the wall. One small window looks out onto the LONELY ROAD TO TOWN.

An unhappy Remi dressed in underclothes scrubs her frock. She holds it up. Soap drips off. Still stained. She sighs.

Sister Aetria enters.

SISTER AETRIA

I thought you could use some company.

REMI

The stain won't come out.

SISTER AETRIA

I know a trick for that.

REMI

(leans forward)

What is it?

SISTER AETRIA

You scrub, and I'll read you a story. That will pass time.

REMI

Oh.

(leans back)

Ok.

Sister Aetria pulls a small, well-worn book from her robes.

SISTER AETRIA

Do you remember where we left off?

REMI

Yeah, Altrus was carrying the Hope Lantern to the mountain city, but he was trapped in the caverns of the Oozemen.

SISTER AETRIA

Ok here we are... The heroic Altrus- make sure you're scrubbing-

BEGIN FAIRYTALE:

INT. CAVERN OF THE OOZEMEN

As Aetria narrates, we see her tale come to life.

*"The heroic Altrus was trapped in a cavern, and blocking his only way out, were ten terrifying Oozemen. Altrus could not run from them because behind him was a bottomless pit. He could not hide from them because the Oozemen could squeeze through the smallest crack in the rock. He could not fight them with his sword, for every time he cut them down, they sprung back up.*

*As the Oozemen closed in around him, Altrus yelled to them:*

ALTRUS

*Stay back!*

*He brandished the Hope Lantern at them in the dark cavern. To his surprise, the Oozemen were more afraid of the flame than of his sword. Altrus got an idea. He quickly covered his sword in oil and set it alight with the hope lantern. The heat from the fire on his sword made the Oozemen harden like clay in an oven, and now when he struck them, they shattered as if they were pottery.*

*Using his new flaming sword, Altrus fought his way past the Oozemen and out of the cavern. He was never so happy to see the sun."*

END FAIRYTALE

Sister Aetria lets the book fall closed, distracted by something she sees out the window.

REMI

(complaining)

Is that it? Altrus still has to climb the Tallest Mountain!

SISTER AETRIA

Hush, Remi.

INSERT: Through the window, a group of SOLDIERS marches up the road. Sister Rania speaks to their Commander.

Aetria opens the window and calls Rania over.

SISTER AETRIA (CONT'D)

Sister Rania, what are the Queen's soldiers doing here?

SISTER RANIA

The prince has been kidnapped by  
the Kingdom of Varya - just over  
the mountain. If he's not returned  
soon, there may be a war.

Sister Rania notices Remi.

SISTER RANIA (CONT'D)

(coldly)

But it's not something the children  
need to worry about.

REMI

Why doesn't a hero help?

SISTER AETRIA

Some things are just too big, Remi.  
Even for a hero.

EXT. DARK FOREST OVERLOOKING TOWN - SUNSET

The Stranger has tracked the Wisp to the edge of the woods.

The Wisp floats out of the dark forest into sunlight. The  
Stranger reaches out, her CLAWS glinting as she SNATCHES -  
and misses. She SNARLS in frustration, and retreats into the  
shadows. The Wisp drifts toward a small TOWN.

The Stranger closely watches the setting sun. Waiting.

INT. ABBEY DORMITORY - NIGHT

Girls sleeping in neat little rows of neat little beds.

Remi opens one eye. She surveys the room. Everyone's asleep.  
She silently slips out of bed.

INT./EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Remi tries to pick the gate's lock with a hairpin. She hears  
a noise, looks over her shoulder. Nothing.

REMI

Come on gate... Open! I have to  
save the prince!

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The Stranger follows the Wisp, eyes trained on it, but it flies high above her reach. It finally sinks downward, falling slowly, slowly... disappearing inside the walls of a well-kept ABBEY.

INT./EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT - SAME TIME

The Wisp blows into the Abbey's garden courtyard. Remi is still working on the lock.

REMI  
C'mon, you gate!

Out of the corner of her eye, Remi catches sight of the bright glowing Wisp. She turns.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Whoa.

The Wisp spirals softly downward, and alights on the surface of the PUDDLE. A single RIPPLE spread through the muddy water, and then the puddle TRANSFORMS - it turns a glowing shade of EMERALD GREEN.

REMI (CONT'D)  
(whispers to herself)  
*Emerald Lake!*

A single ripple pulses through the lake again, and this time it turns into a MIRROR.

Remi sees herself - her shocked, small face - perfectly reflected. Then the image changes: she's atop the Tallest Mountain, a grin on her face, wind whipping through her hair.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Whoa.

She leans closer, her mouth agape. The Remi in the Lake turns to look at her, and meets her eyes.

Suddenly, the Wisp takes flight and POPS right into her mouth.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Eugh-phhl111-phllla!!!

Remi spits and scrapes her tongue, but the Wisp is gone. Swallowed.



REMI (CONT'D)  
Tastes like mothball!

Unnoticed by her, a LIGHT glows over her heart, then fades.

CUT TO:

INT. ABBEY DORMITORY - SAME TIME

A NUN moves among beds sleeping girls, checking on them.

She STOPS when she reaches Remi's bed - it's EMPTY.

The nun GASPS and drops her lantern. She RUNS to raise the alarm.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Remi is still struggling with the gate, her hairpin is completely bent.

A BELL on top of the Abbey's tower begins to TOLL.

REMI  
It's not morning yet!

Lanterns are LIT in the Abbey windows. Nuns are on the move, and voices begin to call.

NUN (O.S.)  
Remi!

REMI  
Oh no.

She tosses her useless hairpin aside, and leans on the gate one last time. By her heart, the Wisp glows. To her surprise, the gate SPRINGS OPEN.

Remi gives one last look over her shoulder, then runs off into the dark.

THEN:

Nuns shuffle out of the building in their slippers.

NUN  
The gate's open!

SISTER RANIA  
How is that possible?

NUN  
(calls to the others)  
Get some torches! We need to find  
her!

Sister Aetria arrives in the Courtyard.

SISTER AETRIA  
What's happened?

SISTER RANIA  
Remi's run off!

The Sisters rush to the open gate. Nuns are calling Remi's name, preparing to search the nearby WOODS. At the treeline, two nuns light TORCHES and hand them out.

SISTER RANIA (CONT'D)  
(to Aetria)  
I told you she was trouble.

Sister Rania grabs a torch and marches into the woods.

Sister Aetria glances behind her, and DOUBLE-TAKES: *a second SISTER RANIA has appeared over her shoulder!*

She strides toward the treeline- leaving Sister Aetria, white as a ghost, behind.

SISTER AETRIA  
(whispers)  
*Stranger.*

Sister Aetria clutches the ABBEY SYMBOL around her neck.

This Sister Rania doesn't pause to collect a torch; she enters the woods, melting into the darkness.

Sister Aetria RUNS back inside the Abbey.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Remi is well ahead of her pursuers. She hears their calls in the distance, but ignores them. She stumbles through the forest, shrinking from the shadows.

She trips on a TREE ROOT, and looks up. The tall, dark tree GROWS impossibly high, the branches CURL ominously over her head.

She gets to her feet. Shadows grow longer, wider, taller, denser. She hears a wolf HOWL. Suddenly, it strikes Remi that she should not be here alone. She RUNS.

The darkness warps Remi's reality into a KALEIDOSCOPE OF TERROR. Around her, lightning bugs morph into GLOWING EYES. Branches reach out to SNATCH HER. The wind PUSHES her and LAUGHS.

Remi makes a break for the nearest treeline, fleeing the forest.

INT. ABBEY

Sister Aetria FLIES up the stairs throwing the door to the Nun's quarters.

INT. ABBEY - NUNS QUARTERS

Deserted. Neat beds in a row.

Aetria runs to hers, and pulls a CHEST full of books from underneath it. She looks over her shoulder, then digs through the books until she uncovers a smaller box made of dark, red wood. Flings it open.

Inside: bones, gems, horns and fangs; vials of dark liquid and sacks of glittering powder.

She grabs a vial of GOLD LIQUID, and a SNAKE FANG MEDALLION, shoves the box back under her bed and runs out the door.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

**STRANGER'S POV - MOVING** - supernaturally sharp eyes cut through the dark; outlines are clear and crisp, nothing escapes her gaze.

A speck of light, the Wisp, is far in the distance; it illuminates the outline of a little girl bobbing between the trees.

The Stranger moves faster.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Remi stumbles out of the woods into a plowed field, breathing heavily. She can hear the nuns in the distance calling her name.

She spots a HAY STACK, in a beam of moonlight. She runs over, and digs herself inside. She pokes her face out into the moonlight, and allows herself a little smile.

EXT. FOREST'S EDGE - NIGHT

**STRANGER'S POV** - the Wisp illuminates Remi, even as she hides in the hay stack.

The Stranger closes in.

CUT TO:

INT. ABBEY - NIGHT

Sister Aetria RUNS up a spiral staircase - she reaches the top of the Abbey's BELLTOWER.

She clutches her medallion - she has DRENCHED it in gold liquid, it seeps through her fingers and drips onto the floor.

SISTER AETRIA

*A Stranger seeks a traveler/protect  
her for the night/keep her safe and  
slumbering/until the morning light.*

A GOLDEN NET appears, spread against the night sky, and fades.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

**STRANGER'S POV** - she breaks into a crazed and jagged RUN, so close to her prey: but all goes BLACK.

**STRANGER'S POV** - suddenly, she's ten feet away, on the other side of the haystack. She looks back to see Remi sleeping peacefully, under the clear protection of a GOLDEN NET. Her eyes NARROW.

EXT. ABBEY - NIGHT - LATER

The nuns are returning to the Abbey, dejected.

Sister Aetria grabs a NUN's arm.

SISTER AETRIA

Did you find her?

The nun shakes her head sadly.

NUN  
We'll search again in the morning.

EXT. FIELD - MORNING

Remi sleeps peacefully in the hay stack, until she is LIFTED upwards by her hair. Her eyes fly open.

A COW has caught her hair in a mouthful of hay. It MOOOOOOOOOS, grumpily, and spits her out. Remi giggles.

In the nearby woods, a shadow SHIFTS, and a CLAWED HAND rests on a tree.

FADE TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Remi stops at the beginning of a long country road. She takes a deep breath, smiles to herself and sets off.

A WAGON trundles past her; she JUMPS out of the way and it blows her hair. Then she spots a TURTLE inching across the road ahead of it. She LEAPS into action, scoops up the turtle and deposits him on the other side of the road.

REMI  
I will help any subject of the  
Kingdom in need!

The turtle looks bemused. Remi skips off, happily.

Behind her, the turtle ventures back into the road.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY - LATER

Remi skips past a ramshackle shed with a sloped roof; sacks of grain SPILL OUT.

Remi spots a RAT feasting on the stores.

REMI  
That's not for you, that's for the  
farmer's chickens!

The rat ignores her.

Remi JUMPS UP onto a sack of grain.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Begone, vile beast!

The rat ignores her.

Remi frowns. Then she LEAPS toward the rat, WINDMILLING her arms.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Eeeee-yaaaaaaa!!!!

The rat looks surprised, and scampers off.

Remi lands, triumphant.

REMI (CONT'D)  
You will no longer steal from  
innocent chickens!

The rat crouches nearby, beneath a rotting board, making no promises.

CUT TO:

INT. DARK FOREST - SAME TIME

The Stranger lurks; watching through the trees as Remi cavorts atop the grain sack.

She's so close, but she dares not venture into the daylight.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD, APPROACHING TOWN

Remi is picking up sticks as she walks, fashioning herself a small wooden SWORD.

REMI  
(boastful)  
All adventurers have swords - OOF!

She COLLIDES with a MERCHANT'S CART.

MERCHANT  
Careful there!

REMI  
(quietly)  
Sorry.

She turns away, and spots a troupe of SOLDIERS outside a guardhouse.

She breaks into a grin and hurries over, holding her stick-sword aloft.

But before she can reach them, a VILLAGER addresses them.

VILLAGER

Have you heard the news? There's a little girl missing from the Abbey.

SOLDIER

The Abbey?

VILLAGER

Yeah, it's a couple miles down the road. It's a home for orphaned girls. One ran off, the Sisters are worried sick.

SOLDIER

Poor little girl.

SOLDIER #2

And in such dangerous times.

SOLDIER

We'll keep an eye out. She'll be back to the Abbey in no time.

Nearby, Remi OVERHEARS. She shrinks.

She turns and slinks away, her stick-sword dragging on the ground.

She TEARS UP, THROWS the stick-sword to the ground and hops over a low-slung WALL.

On the other side: rows and rows of FARMLAND.

Remi runs out into the open fields.

FADE TO:

EXT. FARMLAND - DAY - HOURS LATER

Remi is trudging along, sniffing. Her head is down.

As shadows appear on the ground, she looks up, and realizes she is about to enter THE DARK FOREST.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DARK FOREST - SAME TIME

Hidden, The Stranger is waiting.

CUT BACK:

EXT. FARMLAND - SAME TIME

The dark woods appear ominous to Remi - the trees grimace and distort. She shivers, and turns away.

In the distance, she spots a lonely WATCHTOWER on a hill. She lights up, and sets off.

CUT TO:

INT. DARK FOREST

The Stranger trails her, gliding silently through the woods - and watching the SHADOWS LENGTHEN.

CUT BACK:

EXT. FARMLAND - LATER

Remi marches uphill toward the watchtower, breathing hard. The sky turns PINK as the sun sets.

All around the watchtower, there are rows of sprightly POTATO PLANTS.

EXT. WATCHTOWER - SUNSET

Remi approaches the WOODEN DOOR of the watchtower. An IRON RING serves a knocker, but Remi can't reach it. Her hand finds the doorknob, she twists and pushes the door open just a crack.

REMI

Hello?

No response.

She pushes the door open further. Remi ducks inside, as the LAST LIGHT FADES from the sky.

Across the field, The Stranger slips out from under the cover of the trees.



INT. WATCHTOWER - NIGHT

It's circular room with an unlit FIREPLACE at one end and an old ARMOIRE and SOFA at the other. Above the fireplace hangs a dusty SWORD and SHIELD.

It's dark. Starlight from A WINDOW barely illuminates a SPIRALLING STAIRCASE.

Remi makes a beeline for the stairs.

INT. WATCHTOWER - STAIRCASE

Remi flounces up the staircase, eager to make it to the top.

Suddenly- CRASH. She COLLIDES with a SUIT OF ARMOR.

A CASCADE OF NOISE as the metal helmet is knocked loose, FALLS and ROLLS down a few stairs before skidding to a halt.

REMI

Whoops!

(laughs)

I'll get that for you!

She skips toward the helmet and REACHES DOWN to grab it - just as an ARMORED HAND also reaches for it.

She looks up. The hollow Suit of Armor is reaching for its HEAD.

REMI (CONT'D)

AAAAAAHHHHHH!!!!

Remi RACES back down the stairs.

She's headed for the door when a CAT leaps out and HISSES at her. She's startled, and veers to the side. She spots the sofa and DIVES under it.

CUT TO:

INT. WATCHTOWER - CONTINUOUS

The Suit of Armor marches noisily down the stairs: CLANK. CLANK. CLANK.

CUT TO:

EXT. WATCHTOWER - NIGHT - SAME TIME

A CLAWED HAND is on the doorknob.

CUT BACK:

INT. WATCHTOWER - SAME TIME

The Suit of Armor leans over the fireplace and SNAPS, sparks leap from his metal fingers and soon a FIRE is roaring.

CUT TO:

EXT. WATCHTOWER - NIGHT - SAME TIME

A sudden FLOOD OF LIGHT pours from the windows.

The clawed hand whips away.

CUT BACK:

INT. WATCHTOWER - SAME TIME

The space illuminated, it now looks lived in: there's a cooking apparatus in the fireplace, a carpet on the floor, and a quilt thrown over the back of the sofa.

The Suit of Armor looks left and right, then looks toward the couch: the corner of the carpet is kicked up. She must be under there.

The Suit of Armor walks toward a BARREL OF POTATOES across the room. He passes the cat - perched in the window, staring out into the night. The cat emits a low, quiet growl.

The Suit of Armor retrieves a POTATO from a barrel. It carefully places the potato on the carpet in front of the sofa. It backs away; then waits.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDER SOFA

Remi watches, bewildered. She looks at the potato, looming large in her limited view. Then she looks to the armored feet of the Suit, also clearly visible about 10 feet away.

It occurs to her what he's trying to do: he's trying to lure her out. She GIGGLES.

CUT TO:

INT. WATCHTOWER - CONTINUOUS

Remi (slowly, carefully) wriggles out from under the sofa, and smiles shyly at the Suit of Armor.

BOOM. BOOM. BOOM. The iron knocker strikes the door.

The Suit of Armor holds one armored finger up: one minute. He goes to answer the door.

INT./EXT. WATCHTOWER DOOR

The Suit of Armor opens the door. On the other side is the VILLAGER, the same one who earlier warned the soldiers about the missing little girl. No torch.

VILLAGER

Sorry to bother you at this hour,  
we're trying to spread the word as  
far as we can: there's a little  
girl missing from the Abbey.

CUT TO:

INT. WATCHTOWER - SAME TIME

Remi sneakily opens a WINDOW, and is about to climb out - but as she looks out into the darkness her vision KALEIDOSCOPIES: everything's taller and bigger, the shadows are longer and more menacing. Remi swallows.

BACK TO:

INT./EXT. WATCHTOWER DOOR

VILLAGER

The nuns are eager to get her back  
safe. You haven't seen a little  
girl on her own have you?

The Suit of Armor nods eagerly, opens his door more fully, and POINTS to where Remi... was. She's gone. His gaze moves to the window. It's OPEN.

VILLAGER (CONT'D)  
She must have gone out the window.

Quickly, the Suit of Armor grabs two LANTERNS, SNAPPING to light them. He moves to join the villager outside.

VILLAGER (CONT'D)  
No, no. I'll get her. You'll only scare her, she ran away from you.

The Suit of Armor hesitates, then nods sadly.

The Suit of Armor tries to hand the Villager a lantern, but the Villager has already turned away; he strides off, melting into the darkness.

The Suit of Armor closes the door, crosses the room to the open window and peers out. Nothing but quiet darkness. He shuts it and turns away.

REMI (O.S.)  
Stay back!

Startled, the Suit of Armor looks up. Remi has climbed on top of the ARMOIRE. She's brandishing a CANDLESTICK from behind decorative crested top.

The Suit of Armor's shoulders drop in relief.

REMI (CONT'D)  
I am a fearsome warrior, the Lady of Emerald Lake. I am...

She thinks for a moment...

REMI (CONT'D)  
Remilia the Great!

The Suit of Armor bows sarcastically.

REMILIA THE GREAT (CONT'D)  
And I will not go home. The prince needs my help!

The Suit of Armor cocks his head curiously.

The cat LEAPS up onto the armoire.

REMILIA THE GREAT (CONT'D)  
Back, foul beast!

The cat MEOWS, rubbing against her legs.

The cat steps gingerly into her lap, and curls up.

Remi adjusts.

REMILIA THE GREAT (CONT'D)

Ah! An ally!  
(to Suit of Armor)  
We tire of your tyranny!

The cat YAWNS. Startled, Remi stops waving her candlestick.

The cat begins to purr-snore in her lap. It's asleep.

Remi falls silent for a moment. Then:

REMI

(whispering)  
How do I get her off?

The Suit of Armor reaches up and gently plucks the cat off Remi, transferring it to the couch.

Then the Suit of Armor reaches up again. Remi hesitates, then climbs into his arms. He lifts her down.

On the ground, she's bold again:

REMILIA THE GREAT

Perhaps after all, your heart is  
true! I dub thee Sir Squeaky! Will  
you travel with me, fellow knight?  
We will bring back the Prince and  
restore peace to the--

URGRGHRUGHLLELL.

Her stomach GRUMBLES loudly.

The Suit of Armor (hereafter SQUEAKY) picks the potato, from earlier, up off the floor - he holds it out to Remi as an offering. Remi frowns.

REMI

Don't you have anything to eat  
besides potatoes?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. WATCHTOWER - MOMENTS LATER

Squeaky slices up and fries potatoes into HOMEMADE POTATO CHIPS for Remi.

Remi sits on the couch, cat in her lap, crunching on potato chips. She's cozy, but can't take her eyes off the sword and shield above the fireplace.

FADE TO:

INT. WATCHTOWER - LATER

The fire's gone out, the room is lit only by a candle. Remi and the cat are asleep on the couch. Squeaky puts a blanket over them.

EXT. WATCHTOWER - SAME TIME

The Stranger watches through a window as Squeaky snuffs out the candle. Darkness settles in the watchtower.

She waits.

Then slips her claws under the window sill, silently sliding it open.

CUT TO:

INT. WATCHTOWER

The Stranger moves like a snake over the window sill, pulling herself forward by her claws. She drops silently to the floor, her haunches raised. Then:

SQUEAK. Her head SNAPS toward Squeaky - silent, unmoving, a formidable figure standing guard. A breeze comes again through the open window: SQUEAAKK.

Did he wake? She can't read him: his impassive helmet locked in permanent resolve.

She hesitates.

Then withdraws back out the window.

INT. WATCHTOWER - THE NEXT MORNING

Remi is woken by the RUMBLING of a cart approaching the watchtower. She yawns, stretches, and turns over.

Squeaky's rusted joints groan as he moves for the first time today. He grabs a nearby OIL CAN and tips oil into each of his joints. Empty, he tosses the oil can into a barrel full of similar empty cans.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

He goes outside to meet the visitor.

EXT. WATCHTOWER - CONTINUOUS

A Merchant dressed in smudged leather stands beside a cart pulled by a donkey.

MERCHANT

'ello there. Got any 'tatos for me, mate?

He taps the back of his cart.

MERCHANT (CONT'D)

Brought ya some more oil 'n polish to trade.

The Merchant hands him two oil cans.

Squeaky looks over his shoulder at the watchtower containing Remi. He hands one back, then points to an apple in the back of the cart.

MERCHANT (CONT'D)

What are you gonna do with an apple? You sure?

Squeaky nods.

The Merchant tosses him the apple. Then gives him back the second oil can.

MERCHANT (CONT'D)

Keep it. It's on the house. Let's get those 'tatos loaded up.

Squeaky nods. He and the Merchant fetch a barrel of potatoes each. The Merchant struggles with his, puts it back down.

MERCHANT (CONT'D)

My shoulder's actin up again. Would you mind?

Squeaky picks up the Merchant's barrel as well.

The Merchant rolls his injured shoulder.

MERCHANT (CONT'D)

Got my draft notice in the post today, but if there's a war, don't know what use I'd be.

Squeaky looks at him, nods sympathetically.

MERCHANT (CONT'D)  
I'm not the man I used to be.

Squeaky picks up one of his new oil cans and pretends to pour oil on the Merchant's shoulder.

MERCHANT (CONT'D)  
Good as new eh?

The Merchant laughs and Squeaky claps him on the back.

INT. WATCHTOWER - SAME TIME

In the morning light Remi admires the sword and shield hanging over the mantle.

EXT. WATCHTOWER - SAME TIME

The Merchant's done loading up his cart.

MERCHANT  
Ya know, we could use a hero these days. You thinking about coming out of retirement?

Squeaky shakes his head.

MERCHANT (CONT'D)  
Well...

He sets off with his cart.

MERCHANT (CONT'D)  
(cheeky)  
Always like talking to you, mate.

Squeaky waves, and heads back inside.

INT. WATCHTOWER - CONTINUOUS

Remi's stacked a few empty barrels up and climbed on top, teetering as she reaches for the sword.

Squeaky comes up behind her, nonchalantly plucks her off the barrels. He returns her to the floor and wags his finger at her, "no no no."

Squeaky pulls a small sack from one of his cabinets. He starts packing.



Apple for her, oil for him, and some potatoes, you never know when you'll need some potatoes. Lastly he straps on his sword and shield.

He heads to the door and motions for Remi to follow him.

EXT. WATCHTOWER - CONTINUOUS

Remi follows Squeaky out the door and up the road.

REMI  
What are you doing? Are we going  
somewhere? Are we going on an  
adventure?

Squeaky nods. He plods further down the road, an excited Remi in tow. Then:

TING. A raindrop lands on Squeaky's helmet. He looks up.

REMI (CONT'D)  
(piping up)  
It's raining.

TUNK. A bigger drop hits Squeaky's arm. He glances at the streaks of RUST staining his armor. He looks around.

Up the road: no cover, the path is darkening to mud.

In the forest: The ground is dry, protected by the thick canopy.

He leaves the road, headed for the forest, Remi hesitates, then follows.

EXT. DARK FOREST'S EDGE - CONTINUOUS

As Squeaky enters the forest, Remi stops abruptly at the treeline.

From under the trees Squeaky turns to look at Remi. His head turns inquisitively.

Remi gathers her courage, then stomps decisively into the dark forest.

EXT. DARK FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Squeaky and Remi walk together for a little while.

REMI  
You know, the prince was kidnapped.

Squeaky nods.

REMI (CONT'D)  
I'm going to save him.

Fireflies dance in the twilight of the forest, catching Remi's eye.

REMI (CONT'D)  
If I don't save him, the queen will go to war to save him, and she doesn't want to do that.

Squeaky nods again.

Remi catches a firefly. Giggles. Lets it go. She pauses.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Once I swallowed a firefly. I think.

Squeaky looks at her.

REMI (CONT'D)  
I didn't mean to! It just flew in my mouth. It was really, really, really bright.

Squeaky cocks his head, curious.

Remi catches another firefly, then lets it go.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Sister Aetria says we can catch fireflies but we shouldn't keep them, they like to be wild. She said my sigil is Fireflies. Do you know what a sigil is? The Prince has one. His whole family is Ducks.

She looks at Squeaky.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Usually knights fight for a sigil.

Squeaky looks on.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Where are we going anyway? To a castle? Or a dungeon? Or a dragon's lair?

Squeaky shakes his head. He does the walking fingers, and points at the ABBEY SYMBOL around her neck.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Back to the abbey?? I don't want to  
go back to the abbey!

Squeaky shrugs "too bad". He motions for her to come along.

REMI (CONT'D)  
No! If you take me back there, I'll  
just run away again!

Squeaky motions "come on" again. Remi puts her foot down.

REMI (CONT'D)  
No!

Squeaky scoops her up and tosses her over his shoulder.

Remi beats the back of his armor.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Noooooooooooo! Ow.

Remi looks at her hands. It hurts to bang on metal.

Undeterred, she makes a fist and CLOCKS the back of Squeaky's head.

BOOONG. It rings like a bell.

Squeaky is unfazed.

Remi grins and CLOCKS his helmet again: BOOONG.

Squeaky shifts Remi so she's riding on his shoulders. She raises her fists, about to whale on his helmet, when she spots something:

A BEE HIVE hanging from a tree.

She gets an idea.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Honey! I need honey for my apple.

Squeaky shakes his head "no" and keeps walking.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Hey! Apples are gross without  
honey, everyone knows that!

Squeaky keeps walking.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Don't you know what people eat!?

Squeaky stops. Hesitates. Then slides Remi off his shoulders. He places Remi on a stump, and motions "stay". Then motions it again. "I'm serious"

He shrugs off his sword and shield, turns, and begins to climb the tree with the bee hive.

Remi makes her move.

She darts to his sword and shield and GRABS THEM. They're heavier than she realized. She heaves, and manages to start dragging them away, leaving a GOUGE in the dirt.

Squeaky turns in time to see her making her escape. He starts toward her.

A HOWL pierces the forest around him.

He freezes. Scans the trees. Turns back to Remi, she's gone. He starts quickly after her.

EXT. DARK FOREST - UNDERBRUSH

Remi labors, dragging the sword and shield through bushes, vines, and spiderwebs.

She comes to a large oak. Leans the sword and shield up against it. She looks back the way she came, watching for Squeaky. He doesn't come.

She sighs with relief and rounds the corner of the tree,  
Coming FACE TO FACE WITH A WOLF.

CUT TO:

EXT. DARK FOREST - UNDERBRUSH

Squeaky tracks Remi, following the gouge marks left in the dirt by the sword and shield.

He comes upon the oak tree, his sword and shield lie up against the oak. Remi's nowhere to be seen.

He hears a SCREAM.

He doesn't even stop to pick up the sword and shield. He CRASHES through the underbrush.

EXT. DARK FOREST - CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

The Wolf has Remi cornered against a rock. Yellow eyes shining in the twilight. A GROWL flashes its RAZOR SHARP TEETH.

It LUNGES. Remi cowers.

CAROOMPF! Squeaky TACKLES the wolf out of the air, SLAMMING into a tree. The wolf YELPS and wiggles out of his grasp, disappearing into the forest.

REMI

Whoa!

Remi picks something off the ground, shows it to Squeaky.

REMI (CONT'D)

You knocked out its tooth!

Squeaky stands and brushes himself off. Remi gets quiet.

REMI (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Squeaky nods. He points again at her ABBEY PENDENT and makes a walking motion with his hand. Then he offers her his hand. Remi hesitates.

REMI (CONT'D)

No. I'm still not going back. None of the heroes go back.

Squeaky would roll his eyes, but instead he rolls his whole head.

Remi laughs.

At that moment, kindly SISTER AETRIA steps into view.

SISTER AETRIA

Remi! I'm so glad to see you.

She comes closer.

REMI

Sister Aetria?

SISTER AETRIA

I've been looking all over for you.

She opens her arms and smiles big.

She's missing a TOOTH.

Squeaky pushes Remi behind him.

Aetria's face twists into PURE RAGE. She attacks, CLAWS OUT.

Remi SCREAMS!

The Stranger slashes at Squeaky viciously, opening up long gashes. He keeps his arms up, protects himself as best he can.

Remi wants to help, but doesn't know how.

THE STRANGER  
You should know better than to  
cross my kind!

A furious KICK sends Squeaky crashing to the ground. She slashes again and again.

Her claws grow longer with every strike. She loses her human form piece by piece. She's laughing now.

WHACK! A potato bounces off her head.

She looks over to see Remi rummaging through Squeaky's pack for more. The Stranger ducks out of the way of the second carbohydrate projectile.

She turns her attention to Remi, skittering over on all fours.

Remi SCREAMS and backs away.

An armored hand catches The Stranger and yanks her back, throwing her against the rock.

Squeaky desperately tries to wave Remi off. "Run!"

REMILIA THE GREAT  
I'm not leaving you!

She grabs another potato and hurls it at The Stranger, who easily bats it away and gets to her feet.

A battered, torn up Squeaky again steps between the Remi and The Stranger.

THE STRANGER  
You should have stayed in your  
tower, tin man!

Remi tries to rush The Stranger with another potato.

Squeaky catches her and hurls her back, away from the fight, just as The Stranger jumps on him again, tearing away.

REMILIA THE GREAT

Squeaky you're going to lose if I  
don't help you!

Squeaky finds a moment, on his back in the dirt, to look at Remi and nod, "It's ok."

Remi SCREAMS out. Not in fear, but frustration.

Then on the edge of the clearing, she sees it.

Squeaky's sword and shield. Laying in the grass, glinting in the half-light.

She double takes. It wasn't there before.

REMILIA THE GREAT (CONT'D)

Hang on, Squeaky!

She runs past Squeaky grappling with The Stranger and picks them up.

The Stranger pounces toward Remi, only to be caught in a headlock by Squeaky from behind.

Squeaky pivots, spinning himself once again between Remi and The Stranger. He holds his free hand out to Remi. "Gimme!"

Remilia the Great struggles to drag the sword and shield over, Squeaky holds onto the stranger for dear life.

She hands Squeaky his shield. He disengages, shoves The Stranger back and away.

Remi holds out the sword hilt first. He pulls it directly from the sheath in her hands.

The blade is covered with little scratches. No, not scratches. Names. Hundreds of them.

He turns to face down the stranger. Spins the blade, whistling, through the air. "Pick on someone your own size."

Enraged, The Stranger charges him, screaming, voice unnatural and guttural.

THE STRANGER

Foolish golem! You are nothing!

She slashes at him, but her claws slide off his shield.

She ducks under a counter attack from his sword. Spins away.

He steps forward, swings again, this time she catches the blade in her claws. She leans in, growls in his face.

THE STRANGER (CONT'D)

Old armor should be left to rust--!

CRUNCH! He head butts her, knocks her off balance. Bashes her again with the shield, sends her reeling. He keeps coming.

She barely dodges a thrust, THUNK! the blade sticks in the tree behind her. She tries to disengage. She can't. Her cloak's pinned to the tree.

She looks back at him with rage in her eyes, met only by impassive determination. She makes a decision.

With a SCREECH she TRANSFORMS into a raven.

The dark bird beats its heavy wings in a hasty retreat into the forest.

All that's left is a shred of cloth pinned to the tree. Squeaky pulls his sword out, and turns toward Remi. He leans against the tree, and sinks to the ground.

Remi copies his movement: she leans against the tree, and sinks to the ground.

She looks at the dents in Squeaky's helmet, the gashes in his armor.

REMI

I'm sorry you got hurt.

(looking at the ground)

It's my fault, it's my adventure.

You can go home if you want.

Squeaky puts his thumb in his "mouth", and BLOWS the dent out of his head.

Then he shakes his head. He does the walking motion with his fingers again.

REMI (CONT'D)

(indignant)

I am not going back to the--

He points at her heart.

Remi grins.



REMI (CONT'D)  
Are you coming with me!?

He nods. Squeaky pinches a gash closed, leaving a scar of crumpled metal.

Remi's smile fades. She looks at all his gashes.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Are you gonna be okay?

Squeaky clambers to his feet, and strikes a few strongman poses, SQUEAKING with each motion.

Remi laughs.

Squeaky swings Remi up onto his shoulders, and picks up his sword and shield. He hands them to her and she flourishes them above his head.

They set off toward adventure.

REMI (CONT'D)  
To the tallest mountain! Through  
the Swamp of Goo, and the  
Banditlands, and the Giant  
Lilypads! And we should stop in the  
City, and see the Captured Stars!  
And the Hanging Markets!

She drops the heavy sword, it clatters to the ground.

REMI (CONT'D)  
Oops.

Squeaky picks it up and carries it.

REMI (CONT'D)  
And to a blacksmith, to get my own  
sword! And to fix your head!

FADE TO:

INT. ABBEY - SISTER AETRIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sister Aetria TOSSES and TURNS in her sleep, beneath a window.

A sudden green GLOW washes over her, reaching her eyes and WAKING HER.

SISTER AETRIA  
Huh?

She sits up and looks out the window, into the Courtyard.

INSERT: The puddle in the middle of the deserted Courtyard is glowing EMERALD GREEN.

SISTER AETRIA (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Remi!

EXT. ABBEY - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Sister Aetria, still pulling her robe on, hustles to the edge of the puddle.

The green glow fades into silver-white, then a mirror, then an image: Remi rides on Squeaky's shoulders, grinning and smacking branches as she passes them by.

Sister Aetria's worried face fades into a soft smile.

**OUT.**

**TAG**

EXT. WATCHTOWER

The Merchant trundles up the lane with his cart. He knocks, using the great iron knocker, but no one answers.

The cat emerges from behind the watchtower, and MEOWS.

Merchant  
Ah, hello there!

He jabs his thumb toward the door.

Merchant (CONT'D)  
Finally took off, did he?

The cat MEOWS.

Merchant (CONT'D)  
Good for him.

He slices a chunk of apple and tosses it to the cat. The cat nips it up, then hops into his cart, curls up and falls asleep.

The Merchant chuckles. With his new friend, he heads back down the lane.