

The pod burst into flame as it cleared the clouds, an orange sphere gathering speed as the gravity pulled it towards the ground. From their vantage point, the two large gremlins looked at each other.

"Another one?" gasped the smaller. "Sir, we cannot-"

The larger one cut him off. "Razwog, you were chosen because you do not speak of such despair. You are determined and brave."

"Razwog" stared at the gremlin towering over him. His voice was barely audible when he next spoke. "Y-you, the g-great Warmaster Seerus, you... you think me brave?"

The Warmaster smiled. "I do, as I think you the best of my soldiers. You will be set up in that abandoned depot as soon as the Artifact arrives."

His tone grew serious. "Razwog, I must warn you. Take care of the Artifact. We have taken so long to bring it up here because we set great store by it. Now, listen. If one of those puny creatures gets too close to it for your comfort, bring it back here immediately. We cannot risk its loss."

The gremlin, gulping, nodded his understanding.

"Until then, you must remain here in hiding while we set Ailimer to finish off some of those that are too curious. She's taken around seven of them already."

As Razwog did not seem to grasp his meaning, the Warmaster explained. "The Artifact will be delivered to the depot. She'll guard the depot until then. Anyone who goes down there is in for a harsh welcome."

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*Bang!* The smoking pod's door would not yield. The air inside was stuffy and hot. The knight was beginning to panic and her kicks became more frantic.

*Crash!* The pod door fell open and she on top of it. She sat up and dusted herself off, breathing deeply the fresh, cool air.

Then she began to look around.

The sky, a clear blue, the grass, lush and green. But it seemed wrong, somehow. It was then she noticed it.

A pipe ran through the dirt.

She stood up, grasping her sword hilt in fear, and she wondered wh-  
....who was she?

The thought was troubling. She had no idea who she was. She had no idea where she was.

*What is now? Where is now? When is now?* Questions upon questions piled themselves in her mind, tormenting her as she stood there, staring at nothing. Then she pulled herself together and strode off along a path that offered itself.

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The bright daylight dragged her from the depths of her sleep. Yesterday.....

The thought faded, leaving her bewildered. What happened yesterday? She probed her mind.

Oh, yesterday, she discovered that she existed, she made her way through hordes of pink cubes and green sticky-tongued beasts. Then she came here.

To this... "Rescue Camp".

The residents here prepared the knights for a journey through the mechanical interior of this planet, known as the "Clockworks", to a town named "Haven" where a "Spiral Order" explained things to them. None of the knights ever returned, so it was unknown whether they survived the journey or not.

The previous day had ended with a harsh run through a training depth to give her an idea of what she was up against.

And now she was ready to go.

She grasped her blade, and felt for her gun to make sure it was secure, then she turned and made her way across the bridge to the gate beyond it.

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Ailimer lay on the cold metal floor, doing her best to sleep. Of course, she should really be on her guard, but the the elevator was rusty and squeaked to signal a knight's arrival.

*Squeeeeeeak!*

*No!* her mind shouted. She had been almost there.

Grunting, she struggled to her feet and prepared her trap.

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She stepped off the elevator, her blade held tightly. The place she found herself in was dark. She glanced around nervously, and took one step forward.

Alarms flared around her, the blazing lights casting flecks on the surrounding walls. In front of her stood a large, strange creature, the flecks on its face making it look eerie.

"You have roused me from my sleep, little thing." The creature's voice was rasping, but clearly feminine. "Ailimer does not take kindly to such insult. *Prepare yourself!*" Her voice rose to a shriek as she launched herself at the knight.

She held her blade up and the creature nearly impaled herself on it, at the same time holding up a handgun oddly similar to the knight's own. The knight was forced to hold her shield up against a powerful bullet that shoved her backwards. Dropping her shield quickly, she aimed a stab at this "Ailimer", which surprised her.

"No one tangles with a Gremlin and returns alive!" she shrieked, letting fly a number of bullets from a gun. The knight threw herself upon the ground to avoid the painful impact.

This was going to be a long fight.

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They circled, watching, each waiting for the other to make an error. Finally, Ailimer, tired of waiting, launched a number of bullets at the knight, following up with a charge attack.

And the knight was not prepared.

She stumbled, fell under the power of the gremlin's gun, her sword out of her reach.

Ailimer cheered, and raced towards the knight, a small sword (the name was dagger? the knight could not remember) out to kill her foe.

"You don't think you're the only one with a gun?" The gremlin stopped still in confusion.

She should have remembered it before this.

The gremlin was standing, staring at her, not realizing her meaning.

And a bullet pierced her.

And *she* fell.

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The knight climbed to her feet, and retrieved her sword.

"I have found myself a name," she whispered as she stood over the gremlin, her hand held out in front of her. "Ailimer was the name from one side to the other...."

"...Remilia, the name from the other side to this."

Beneath her feet, a turning gear shook the ceiling above her and a clod of dirt fell onto her outstretched hand.

"This, a piece of earth made of many bits... it represents our Order, made of many knights, brave and true.

"I am Remilia of the Earth."