

SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

Screenplay by

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Based on the creations of
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FADE IN:

EXT. FORBIDDEN LANDS OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

A HAWK flies into a ravine, right past a teenaged boy riding a dark horse on a narrow ledge.

The horse is named AGRO. The boy, in ceremonial vestments ill-suited to travel, is known as WANDER. Both look weary, but grimly determined.

They come to a break in the ledge. Agro backs up, makes a leap, lands on the other side of the gap.

Clutched tightly in Wander's arms is a body wrapped in a quilted shroud.

Cliffs give way to forest filled with fireflies.

The moon seems to peer at them through intertwined branches.

Wander pauses at a waterfall.

He takes a drink from its waters in a cupped hand, cleans the grime from his face.

He looks at the towering rock formations ahead. Still can't see his destination.

They pass through wilderness.

They pass through marshland.

They come at last to a stone gate.

It resembles the rock formations but carved in the ancient style of the Forbidden Lands.

They ride past the narrow aperture, onto--

EXT. FORBIDDEN LANDS - DAY - OVERCAST

--a bridge made of giant stone blocks, leading to a magnificent, towering SHRINE.

The bridge is colossal, spanning over a gigantic ravine.

Wander is overpowered by awe.

WANDER
Look at that, Agro. We made it.

Wander closes his eyes, breathing in the air of the breeze, letting the gentle light filtering through the clouds glow warmly on his face.

He looks down at the bundle in his arms.

The Shrine looms over them, beautiful but foreboding.

Wander rides into its shadowy, gaping maw of an entrance. The hawk flies past, over--

--a hazy sun, casting it in silhouette.

A map, drawn on parchment. It is in shadow for a moment, then the sunlight shines upon it once more.

LORD EMON (V.O.)

That place... began from the
resonance of intersecting points.
They are memories, of ens and
naught.

PULL BACK TO SHOW--

The map is held in the hands of LORD EMON, a man in shamanistic garb.

He is decorated with accoutrements made of the shells of tortoises and hermit crabs.

His masked face turns to look at:

The grand, towering Shrine rising from desolate plains. Lord Emon's masked ACOLYTES rest nearby, with their horses.

LORD EMON (V.O.)

Etched into stone, blood, young
sprouts, sky... and the one with
the ability to control beings
created from light.

Wind blows grass gently against intricately carved stones, where a LIZARD with a white glowing tail rests.

A shadow passes over: the hawk descends and pins the lizard's tail, until the lizard detaches and scrambles away.

The hawk eats the tail whole, and stares at:

HAWK POV

Lord Emon, in the full color spectrum including ultraviolet.

The hawk's gold eyes glitter.

LORD EMON (V.O.)

In that world, it is said that if
one should wish it, one can bring
back the souls of the dead.

Lord Emon watches the hawk, unnerved, when he senses one of
his acolytes behind him, reaching for--

--a delicious-looking fruit hanging from a tree.

Emon whirls around, catches the man's arm, shakes his head.

LORD EMON (V.O.)

...But to trespass upon that land
is strictly forbidden.

The acolyte lowers his arm and bows his head, in a mix of
shame and disappointment.

Lord Emon understands, giving him a satchel of food.

The hawk takes flight over their heads, and Lord Emon hears a
deep, rumbling laughter, both male and female combined,
emanate from the surrounding land.

LORD EMON

...It knows we are here.

ACOLYTE

What did you say, Lord Emon?

LORD EMON

Dormin.

The Acolytes stiffen with fear.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

I fear we have been tricked into
giving it a means of escape. Ever
it lusts to inhabit a human body,
unbound from this land, and now it
has lured two. Male and female.

ACOLYTE

It will spawn a race of devils...

Lord Emon nods.

LORD EMON

We must hurry and capture the
apostate... ere he dooms us all.

Lord Emon mounts his horse, and urges the others to follow.

They ride off for the Shrine in the distance.

INT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP - DAY

Wander rides Agro down a spiraling stone staircase in the dark of the Shrine's tower.

At the bottom of the steps is a large pool. The water reflects nothing.

Wander rides Agro into a cathedral-like main hall.

Here, light streams in from a circular ceiling aperture.

From between the pillars and altar leading to the open, vast grass plains and distant mountains.

On either side of the hall, grotesque figures of gigantic carved stone glare down at them menacingly, 5 on either side:

- horse with ornamental 'reins'
- long-tailed bird
- spiny electric eel
- crowned bull
- humanoid swordsman
- sabre-toothed lion
- large-eyed lizard
- crab-legged tortoise
- winged sandworm-serpent
- a clawed demon with bracelets, rising out of a tower.

Wander eyes these gatekeepers of the castle ruins warily.

The hawk alights on the edge of the ceiling aperture, and stares down at:

HAWK POV

Wander, bathed in the light. Huge, square stone tiles comprise the floor, Wander astride Agro in the center of one of them. With the statues occupying squares, lined on either side, the cathedral resembles a giant chess board.

Wander dismounts. With careful reverence, he pulls the body down from the back of the horse, and carries it to the altar. Pale, bare feet and legs peeking out from the quilted shroud.

Wander removes the shroud, revealing a beautiful dark-haired girl in a white dress. Her name, in life, was MONO.

Agro approaches Mono's lifeless body, peering down at it and nudging it hopefully.

Wander pets Agro's mane reassuringly. Behind them--

-- humanoid shadows climb out of the floor with an unearthly sound, shambling toward them.

Wander unsheathes his sword, whirling around. The blade seems to collect the light pouring into the hall and refract it.

The shadows shrink in awe of the blade's power, evaporating into the sunlit stone.

Disembodied voices, male and female joined in unison, boom from above - DORMIN. Wander looks at the light-filled ceiling aperture, from whence it emanates:

DORMIN (V.O.)
*Thou possesses the Ancient Sword?
So thou art mortal...*

Wander takes a breath, summoning his courage.

WANDER
I was told that in this place, at
the end of the world, there exists
a being who can control the souls
of the dead.

DORMIN
*Thou art correct... We are the one
known as Dormin...*

Wander swallows. This is it. He glances at Mono.

WANDER
She was sacrificed for having a
cursed fate. Please... bring back
her soul.

Wander cringes at his own taboo words. The silence lasts for but a moment, but for him it is excruciating.

A dark chuckle reverberates through the hall.

DORMIN

*The maiden's soul? Souls that are
once lost cannot be reclaimed... is
that not the law of mortals?*

Wander bows his head. His journey has been for naught.

DORMIN (CONT'D)

*With that sword, however... it may
not be impossible.*

Hope flares back into Wander's eyes.

WANDER

Really?!

The word escapes with desperate, childish enthusiasm. Wander tries to compose himself.

DORMIN

*That is, of course, if thou manage
to accomplish what We askest.*

That sobers Wander. He knew it wouldn't be that easy.

WANDER

I will do as I must.

DORMIN

*Behold the idols that stand along
the wall... thou art to destroy all
of them.*

Wander frowns at them, instinctively raising his sword.

DORMIN (CONT'D)

*But those idols cannot be destroyed
by the mere hands of mortal...*

WANDER

Then how am I meant to do it?

DORMIN

*In this land there exist colossi
that are the incarnations of those
idols. If thou defeat those
colossi, the idols shall fall.*

WANDER

I understand.

DORMIN

*But heed this, the price you pay
may be heavy indeed.*

WANDER
It does not matter.

DORMIN
Very well...

WANDER
Where do I find the colossi?

DORMIN
Raise thy sword by the light...

Wander lifts the sword, and sunlight converges on the blade.

DORMIN (CONT'D)
*... And head to the place where the
sword's light gathers...*

The sword sends out a beam of light across the landscape.

DORMIN (CONT'D)
*There, thou shalt find the colossus
thou art to defeat...*

The sound and presence fades away.

Wander looks at Mono. Kisses her.

He reluctantly pulls away and mounts Argo.

Wander rides out of the temple balcony, onto--

EXT. FORBIDDEN LANDS

-- the stone steps leading down from the Shrine of Worship,
down onto the soft, windswept grasses of the lonely plains.

On his swift horse Agro, Wander rides out into the haunted
land, sword held loft to guide his way.

MEANWHILE

Lord Emon and his men see the silhouette of the dark horse
and her rider on the horizon, following a beam of blue light.

LORD EMON
There he is.

ACOLYTE
What is he doing? What is that
light?

LORD EMON

He tracks the Guardians with the ancient sword. He means to go through with the wicked sacrifice, it seems.

Wander does not see them, however. The hawk circles him from high above, watching - from up here, Wander and Agro looks so small and insignificant, a black dot on the vast and ancient landscape, dwarfed by everything: mountains, hills, canyons.

DORMIN

Thy first foe... is in the land of the vast green fields... rows of guiding graves...

Wander startles, looking about - the voice seems to come not from any certain source, such as the temple ceiling, but from within himself now.

WANDER (V.O.)

Where are you? Are you in my thoughts, Dormin? Can you hear me as clearly as I hear you? I suppose there can be no hiding from you in this strange land... if you are bound here, as the clerics believed, you are certainly not bound to the Shrine.

As if in answer, there is a resounding chuckle that Wander feels reverberating through his bones. He shudders. He will get no clear answers from Dormin, but he is on the right track - Dormin can in fact hear his thoughts.

Wander focuses in on Argo's breath as he gallops...

...toward burial mounds in the distance.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY - REMINISCENCE

NOTE: *events Wander is remembering from before he entered the Forbidden Lands are shown in the style of 'Reminiscence Mode' (film-grain/sepia) from the original game, to distinguish between past and present time.*

Agro walks slowly, head down, his halter lead by--

--Lord Emon, astride his own weary steed. Lord Emon is slumped in the saddle, as quiet and despondent as the MOUNTED WARRIORS around him.

The village has been constructed in the shadow of the mountains.

The hoofs of the war-horses kick up mud and grit.

The soil is very poor - greenery seems not to thrive here.

The buildings are a patchwork of different materials. Most of the dwellings are yurt-like structures.

There are some wood structures, like a small thatched-roof lookout tower, where the GUARD on duty waves at Lord Emon.

Lord Emon raises his hand in acknowledgment, but it is a small, listless gesture.

The guard's face falls. That was not a good sign.

The rare stone building is a TEMPLE - it is of a simple, cylindrical shape, but has windows in the top and has two guards at its entrance.

Wander, in a rustic tunic and cloak, hacks at a straw dummy with a crude sword.

He switches to a bow, shoots another dummy, whirls around when he hears hoofbeats.

WANDER'S POV

He sees the approaching war party, and lowers his bow.

Everyone in the small village comes out...

...of their yurt-like dwellings...

...or stops their work in the fields...

To stare searchingly at the returning men.

In wagons, pulled by riderless horses including Argo, are the bodies of fallen soldiers.

The villagers gasp, horrified. Some of them rush to the sides of the wagon, finding their loved ones' body and wailing with shock and grief.

Wander approaches Lord Emon.

WANDER

Lord Emon. What has happened?

LORD EMON

The sand tribe has returned to the dunes. But we paid a heavy price.

WANDER

Will you let me take up arms with you, and avenge them?

LORD EMON

You are not ready.

WANDER

We do not have enough men to withstand another onslaught.

LORD EMON

We also do not have enough men to plow and harvest the fields, a task I notice you have neglected.

Wander kneels, offering up his crude sword.

WANDER

I have been training. I am young, but strong. I desire to become a cleric.

LORD EMON

Not just a warrior, but a cleric?

WANDER

It is not just my arm that is strong, but my faith.

LORD EMON

I do not doubt this. But a man desires more than to pray and fight. Are you so eager to take the vow of chastity?

Wander tries not to act embarrassed.

WANDER

... It is a sacrifice I am willing to make, sir.

Lord Emon regards him a moment.

LORD EMON

...You would need a war-horse.

WANDER

I will find one!

LORD EMON

No need.

Lord Emon tosses Agro's halter at Wander.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

Ride her, and she is yours.

Wander looks at the crestfallen horse.

WANDER

But Lord Emon, are you sure she
still has the spirit for war?

LORD EMON

I will know when you ride her.

Wander tucks his sword in his belt, picks up the halter.

Agro raises her head to her full height. It's now obvious
just how huge and powerful a war-horse she is.

Wander approaches her, drawing up the halter.

She watches him steadily, unmoving.

Wander places a hand on her neck - she jerks away, snorting.

WANDER

Easy girl.

Wander hoists himself up... and Argo BOLTS.

Wander is barely on Agro's back, and Agro bucks and screams
angrily in an effort to get him off.

Wander is thrown right over Agro's head, into the mud.

Lord Emon dismounts, and hands him the halter again.

LORD EMON

Take her to the maiden at the lake.
She may have better luck with the
horse... and perhaps you will have
better success with the maiden.

Wander glares at the horse, who snorts and stamps the ground.

He pulls himself to his feet, trudges away... but Agro is not
following. He turns, irritated, until he realizes:

Agro is looking back at the wagon, and at a particular
soldier being carried away by his mourning family.

Wander softens.

WANDER

He is departed. Come now. Let us go
and find you a place to rest.

Agro's ears go back. She lowers her head, and follows Wander.

EXT. FORBIDDEN LANDS - GREEN HILLS - DAY - PRESENT

With the Shrine and bridge left far in the distance, Wander leads Agro through misty burial mounds.

In the center of these burial mounds is what looks like a massive moss-covered stone cairn.

As they enter its shadow, Agro stops and looks at it, but Wander pays no mind.

Leaving Agro behind, Wander steps into the entrance of--

THE BURIAL MOUND

Which Wander finds to be a rather long, dark tumulus tunnel underground.

Wander feels the side walls, finds a burnt-out wall-sconce torch. Takes out flint from a pouch, strikes it with the sword, sparking and lighting the torch.

Raising the torch, he can see that:

Recesses flanking both walls, and inside, sarcophagi--

-- containing mummified corpses in repose.

Wander regards them, frowning.

WANDER (V.O.)

*Why have you brought me here,
Dormin? Are these sacrifices made
to you? Warriors who failed your
challenge? Did these souls not
warrant resurrection? You have the
power to give life to the dead...
yet you show me the tombs of those
you denied?*

Finally, he comes to... a dead end.

He turns to go back, when what looks like a tapered stone pillar smashes through the ceiling of the tunnel, piercing all the way through into the ground, shaking the tunnel and blocking his path.

Wander's torch drops on the damp ground, going out.

The 'pillar' lifts out again, and the new hole in the ceiling is quickly blocked by a blue, glowing circle. Like a giant eye, peering in.

Wander's sword refracts the blue light into a beam at the eye. A shrill scream, and the eye disappears.

Cracks appear in the ceiling of the tunnel, and rocks come loose and fall down, barely missing Wander's head. He has to find a way out, before he is buried.

Wander runs like mad for the exit, but as he does so, the 'pillar' comes back, several of them in rapid succession, smashing in the tunnel after him.

Wander finds the light of the tunnel entrance, throws himself:

OUTSIDE

Where Agro rears, lets out a shrill whinny, bolts away.

Big, rumbling, ominous footsteps. Wander slowly turns, sees:

THE STONE CAIRN

Which is actually a bigger version of the horse idol - much bigger - striding over the tunnel toward him. We shall call this earthen creature PHAEDRA.

Its legs, shaped like long stone blades, dig into the earth with every step.

Rocks scraping against each other, dust and pebbles unsettling, its neck moves, lowering its head to peer down at Wander with its glowing blue eyes.

PHAEDRA'S POV

Wander stands awe-struck, but Phaedra's gaze shifts down to the sword in his hand.

Phaedra's eyes turn from glowing blue to orange.

It lifts its head, the statue's head rises upward into the sky to its full 90-ft gargantuan height, and even taller as it rears back and lets out an ear-splitting cry, its massive forelegs coming down hard at Wander.

Wander snaps out of his awe just in time to avoid the hoofless stone blades from impaling him into the earth.

Wander scrambles, as the earth explodes behind him. The ground trembles from the impact of Phaedra's 50-ton weight.

Phaedra runs after him, quickly overtaking him, and even running over and past him. Phaedra wheels around and scrapes the ground, preparing for another charge.

Wander, shaking with fear and adrenaline, draws the ancient sword.

Light reflects off the blade, aimed at the colossus. Phaedra turns its head sharply away, as if the light pains its eyes. It bucks about wildly in rage, and opens up a fissure in the ground to one of the tunnels.

Its forelegs get stuck in this depression. It kicks out its back legs at the burial mounds in frustration.

Wander runs as fast as he can across the burial mounds, circling around Phaedra.

Wander reaches the crest of the hilltop, behind Phaedra.

He's facing Phaedra's back - he is now higher, and Phaedra is down low into the tunnel.

This is his opportunity - he runs and LEAPS--

Right onto Phaedra's vine-and-stone 'tail'.

Phaedra realizes the human has climbed onto him, and emits a terrible, shrill whinny-like cry.

Phaedra rears onto its back legs, gets its forelegs onto the upper edge out of the hole, though it has to pull its back legs into the hole before it can climb out.

Phaedra thrashes its tail around wildly, with Wander still clinging on.

Phaedra sprints into a full gallop across the Green Hills.

Agro watches this much larger version of herself racing in the distance.

Wander realizes he will soon be thrown off - he climbs the tail like a ladder, trying to reach its back.

Phaedra rears and bucks violently.

Wander holds on, reaching the grass 'fur' along its back.

Wander stabs his sword into the colossus' hide - no blood, no change in Phaedra. He might as well have stabbed a mound of turf. He tries again, desperately trying to find a weak spot.

The sword catches the light, and aims it toward--

--Phaedra's neck. An intricate blue SIGIL glows through the fur in response to the sword's light.

Wander considers this for a moment, decides this must be important. He crawls up the neck toward the sigil.

Wander touches the sigil - it hums and vibrates with power.

He's touched a nerve - Phaedra lets out a sharp cry and thrashes its head around, but Wander hangs on tight.

He pulls back his sword... and PLUNGES IT INTO THE SIGIL.

Black blood spurts out in a geyser that drenches Wander.

Phaedra screams one last time in agony and crashes to the earth, with Wander on top. The colossus shudders.

Wander climbs down, looks into Phaedra's eyes as they turn from orange to blue, flickering.

Wander places his hands on Phaedra, confused by his feelings. He sees--

Agro, coming out from around one of the burial mounds, terrified and looking hesitantly at Wander as if asking for reassurance that it's safe to come out.

Wander looks back at Phaedra.

WANDER (V.O.)

*... I am sorry. May your spirit
find peace for your sacrifice.*

Phaedra stops shuddering, and lies still. The light in its eyes fades to dull stone.

Wander collapses against Phaedra's head, from exhaustion and emotion. Agro comes close, nudges his shoulder, and he transfers to hugging his living horse friend.

But then, black tendrils issue out from Phaedra's wound.

They fly like arrows, right past Agro rearing and kicking to fend them off - the tendrils plunge right into Wander.

Wander cries out in pain and shock. He weaves, and collapses.

BLACKOUT.

A WHITE LIGHT.

Streaking through the darkness like a tunnel. Symbols.

Wander shields his eyes and peers into the light, thinks he can make out:

The form of Mono, mainly her dark hair contrasting and blocking some of the intense, over-exposed light.

WANDER (V.O.)

Mono... I found you...

It appears that Mono is struggling to see him in the darkness, just as he struggles to see her in the light.

WANDER

I am right here, Mono... come with me and live... why can I not call out to you, so you know I have come to save you?

Wander reaches out to her.

He takes a step forward, and another... but with each step, he seems to be getting further away from her, not closer...

...even as the light becomes more intense and overtakes his vision...

FADE TO WHITE.

EXT. LAKESIDE - VILLAGE - DAY - REMINISCENCE

Wander brings Agro to a lakeside hut. A dark-haired young girl washes in the lake, her wet white robe clinging to her curves. Mono. Alive.

Wander stops, and watches her fondly. Until he notices:

A snake, writhing in the water toward her.

Wander rushes into the water to stop the snake, but a hawk swoops in and snatches it.

Mono turns and sees Wander, standing in the water.

MONO
What are you doing?

WANDER
Trying to save you from a snake.

Mono glances down lasciviously.

MONO
Oh really? And who is winning?

Wander, embarrassed, reacts to her teasing.

WANDER
...I brought you this horse.

Mono steps out of the water, wringing out her hair.

MONO
You mean *your* horse, do you not?
One that you will ride into battle?

WANDER
No. She does not like me.

Mono strokes Agro's coat.

MONO
She has good sense.

Wander takes her hand.

WANDER
I am not going to battle, Mono. I
will not become a cleric.

Mono's eyes widen.

MONO
Why not? This has been your dream
since childhood!

WANDER
Lord Emon will not accept me as an
initiate, though he needs the men.

MONO
You are young, Wander. Too young
for the initiation.
(MORE)

MONO (CONT'D)

(sighs)

And here I thought you had chosen me instead.

WANDER

...I have. Every day my initiation was delayed tested my resolve. Had I been allowed to devote myself to matters of spirit and war, I might have been content to let you find happiness with another.

She almost protests, but Wander stops her:

WANDER (CONT'D)

...But I can wait no longer. This horse was to be my war-horse, but now I wish it to be my gift to you... for your hand in marriage.

Mono withdraws her hand.

MONO

I am to be the reason for giving up your life's purpose? Some paltry consolation for your 'weakness of resolve'?

WANDER

Not at all.

Wander leans in to kiss her, but Mono shoves his face away, much to his confusion. She climbs astride Agro.

Mono peers down at him narrowly.

MONO

Until you prove yourself worthy, do not expect to mount either of us.

Mono spurs Agro with her heels, riding off and disappearing over a hillside.

Wander watches her go, befuddled.

Then the frustration gives way to a smile and a lovelorn sigh: what a woman.

Mono, past an obscuring hill, reins in Agro and breaks into a smile: silly boy, that Wander.

Then, much to her surprise, she sees him run over the crest of a bluff - he jumps down and climbs astride Agro behind her.

Agro reacts with angry indignation.

Mono scowls.

MONO (CONT'D)

And just what do you think *you* are doing?

WANDER

You thought you could escape me that easily? I am a very fast runner.

MONO

You have not proved anything yet.

WANDER

I mounted the *horse*.

MONO

Only because *I* was already on her! You cheated!

WANDER

So be it. I shall not care, as long as I have you.

MONO

Hmph, and you fancied yourself a *priest*, of all things. Well, *have me* you shall not!

Mono spurs the horse into a full, headlong gallop.

She guides Agro into making sharp turns, and leaps over fallen trees and tricky gullies.

Wander has his arms tightly around her waist though. He leans in and whispers into her ear:

WANDER

...I am not going anywhere.

They begin to ride over more gentle, open slopes.

The synchronized, rocking motion of their hips against one another as they ride is hard for Mono to ignore. She blushes.

Agro slows down to a halt, breathing hard. Exhausted.

Mono slowly turns toward Wander, breathing hard too.

WANDER (CONT'D)

You are not paltry.

MONO

... And I am glad for your
weakness.

Mono twists most of the way around, and they kiss, embracing.

Agro looks back at them, snorts and paws the ground with annoyance. She did not ask to be party to this - if she could speak, she would tell them to get off her back and go somewhere else.

Wander and Mono pull away enough to gaze at each other adoringly. But then a panicked cry from Agro makes them look:

AHEAD

A large human WARRIOR, astride a BULL, a giant broadsword hanging at his side.

This man has a thick, muscle-bound body, and a menacing gaze.

Mono and Wander exchange worried looks.

WANDER

He is one of our people... stay
here.

MONO

Wander, no.

But Wander is already dismounting.

He approaches the warrior.

WANDER

Greetings, friend. What brings you
out here, so far from the village?

The Warrior spurs his mount to walk slowly forward, drawing his sword.

Wander, realizing the danger, halts and runs back to the horse and girl, climbing on and racing off.

The warrior spurs the bull. It is bulkier and not as fast as Agro, but it gains momentum quickly.

Wander looks back, sees the Warrior in pursuit.

They near the lake hut, and dismount.

WANDER (CONT'D)

(to Mono)
Go inside!

MONO
Come with me!

Wander pulls out his bow, aims and lets loose at--

--the bull, now in full charge - a couple arrows bury themselves in the animal's thick hide, but do not cause it any pause.

Wander rolls out of the way in time to avoid being trampled or gored by the rampaging bull.

The Warrior leaps off the bull, and strides toward Wander.

Wander barely has time to toss aside his bow and draw his sword, blocking a mighty swing from the Warrior's blade.

The Warrior and Wander are locked in brutal combat.

Agro sees the Warrior's bull, pulls away from Mono and charges at the horned creature.

Agro kicks at the bull, and the bull tosses its head and tears Agro's side.

With his heavier blade, the Warrior bashes Wander's sword out of his hand, grabs Wander by the throat, lifts him up, and throws Wander to the ground.

He plunges his sword down for a killing blow at Wander, who rolls so that the blade buries into the earth.

The Warrior punches him in the face.

Wander's nose drips blood down to the earth, as the Warrior hulks away.

With blurring vision, Wander sees the Warrior stride toward Mono, who is kneeling next to the injured Agro.

Mono is pulled away from Agro by the towering warrior, - before the Warrior can rise again, Wander has climbed up onto his back.

The Warrior tries to grab him, throw him off, but Wander tightens his arms around the Warrior's neck...

The Warrior falls, unconscious...

The Bull, weaving from blood loss, crumples to a heap.

Wander goes to Mono, embracing and calming her.

She scrambles back to Agro. Wander follows.

Wander kneels down and inspects the wound.

It looks pretty bad.

They exchange worried looks.

MONO (CONT'D)

Find me bandages, in the hut.
Spirit of grain should help as
well, and a threaded needle. There
will be pain: you shall have to
help me hold her, or else she will
struggle.

Wander nods, and rushes inside. Before he does, he notices:

Mono goes over to the unconscious warrior.

She checks his pulse.

MONO (CONT'D)

...You will live. Bastard.

Mono takes off her sash and ties the Warrior's hands behind his back, for when he wakes up.

Wander grimly smiles.

Noticing Agro's expectant stares that say 'Uh, those bandages please', Wander heads --

INSIDE THE LAKESIDE HUT

To do as he was bid, but then stands totally at a loss.

Mono comes in, opens a drawer and grabs the bandages, rushing outside.

Wander goes to a window and watches her tend to Agro.

A LITTLE LATER THAT NIGHT

Mono opens the door, watching as men from town haul the awoken and raging Warrior away. She shakes her head at the sight, and turns to Wander.

MONO (CONT'D)

You had no idea where they were,
did you?

WANDER

No. You have never invited me
inside.

Mono closes the door.

She wipes his bloody nose with the edge of her sleeve.

MONO

Well. We should remedy that.

Mono opens her robe.

FADE TO WHITE.

WANDER

Lies in a white void. A shadow-humanoid stands over him.

EXT. FORBIDDEN LANDS - GREEN HILLS - DAY - PRESENT

WANDER'S POV

The dark, faceless blob of the humanoid looking down at him becomes the snout of Agro.

Wander slowly comes to, and realizes Agro has lain beside him, keeping watch. Wander pats her appreciatively. He draws the sword and sees:

The light shoot toward a distant lake. He hears Dormin's voice, again seemingly coming from within himself:

DORMIN

A colossal shadow soars through the sky across a ruin, hidden in the misty lake... a ripple of thunder lurks underwater... the anger of the mounted giant shatters the earth...

WANDER (V.O.)

What are these colossi, and why do you desire their destruction? What kind of game are you playing, Dormin?

No response. He sighs, painfully gets to his feet.

WANDER

...I suppose it does not matter. When my task is done, if you do as you promised, I care not. I do not want to know. It would be too great a burden, to know the price of a soul.

Wander urges Agro up as well.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Come Agro. We have more to do.

EXT. GREEN HILLS - FORBIDDEN LANDS - DAY

Lord Emon reins in his horse at the Green Hills, aghast:

The place is a mess, rubble and debris everywhere from the raging battle.

Lord Emon dismounts, and so do his men.

He searches, sees a pillar of light reaching straight to the heavens above.

Lord Emon walks toward the light, apprehensively, until he finds:

The body of Phaedra, sprawled out in the grass.

LORD EMON
He has made the first sacrifice.

ACOLYTE
Where will he go next?

LORD EMON
I do not know. Wherever Dormin sends him. He is a puppet... and now he harbors a piece of Dormin's malignant soul.
(quietly, to himself)
Wander, what have you done?

EXT. LAKE - FORBIDDEN LANDS - DAY

Wander rides past rocky cliffs encircling a foggy lake.

Ruins peek up through the surface of the water. Once a fortress if not a city, submerged over the ages.

This is as far as Agro can go. Wander dismounts, and makes his descent.

He leaps to stone pillars, climbing down rusted gates, until he drops down into the lake itself.

The lake is greenish, murky, its depth difficult to fathom.

Looking upward, Wander sees:

AVION, a giant bird-like colossus with a long tail, peering down at him from its perch atop a ruined tower. Its unblinking blue gaze is unsettling.

His gaze on Avion, Wander does not notice a twisting shadow in the water's depths, lit with glowing spikes and eyes, rising toward him.

Sensing something, he looks down, and flails to avoid the head of HYDRUS as it breaks the water's surface.

The glowing spikes crackle with electricity, as the spine of the sea serpent colossus arcs back into the depths.

Wander swims toward a platform, climbs on top of it, gasping.

Avion, the great carrion-bird, still watches and waits.

Wander glares.

WANDER (V.O.)

Why do you watch, you vulture? You think you can let the serpent do the work? Do you think yourself safe up there on your perch?

He draws out his bow, nocking an arrow and letting it fly--

-- into the breast of Avion. Avion looks at the arrow, and then back at Wander, its eyes orange. It screeches, and takes flight, gliding at--

Wander, wide-eyed - unprepared for a counterattack.

Avion is upon him in moments - as its shoulder crashes into Wander, it knocks the bow from his hands. He grabs on for dear life.

The bow sinks into the dark water.

Wind rushing past him, Wander slowly and with great difficulty climbs from the shoulder of Avion--

-- to its back.

Wander draws his sword.

He searches Avion's head for a sigil, does not find any.

Then he notices the sword is shining a beam of light toward--

--a glowing sigil at the end of Avion's long, flat tail.

Wander groans - how is he going to get over there?

Wander crouches, and crawls toward the tail.

Avion will not allow this - it barrel-rolls in the air.

Wander barely hangs on, and then when Avion straightens out, he makes a run for the tail.

The tail swerves back and forth, twisting, creating a moving path. Wander almost loses his balance in several places, getting only a few steps in before having to crouch and wait for another good moment to make progress.

Wander makes it to the end, dropping down.

Avion decides to fly upward sharply, but not before--

--Wander plunges his sword into the sigil with a spurt of black blood.

Avion cries out, screeching.

The tail is pointed almost straight down, and Wander is hanging by his sword lodged into the tail.

Avion's form freezes into a posture of pain, then falls into a nosedive.

The tail is now high, and Wander hangs onto the sword, riding the colossus straight toward the lake.

But right before they reach the water, Avion recovers, flapping its wings.

Wander is aghast - why is it not dead?

Then he sees: a sigil shows up on each of Avion's wing tips.

Wander's mind is boggled by the prospect of getting on Avion's moving, beating wings, but he has no other choice.

Back across the tail he goes, though this time the tail is frozen straight. At least he has accomplished that much.

Wander crawls along a wing, his whole body bending and going up and down with every flap. He wretches, getting nauseous. It gets worse the further out he goes, until his hands find the glowing sigil. He readies his sword --

Avion does another roll.

Wander is dizzy, disoriented, and stabs... but his aim is off, and it pierces just outside the sigil.

He tries again... and this time gets it enough within the sigil that it spurts black blood and disappears.

The wing stiffens, paralysis setting in. The wing dips into the water, the other wing tilted upward.

Wander has to climb almost straight upward, on the flapping wing, to get to the last sigil.

He has to time this one just right. Wander climbs up the wing, waiting for the tip to be coming toward him. He stabs, misses. Tries again... and gets it. Not very deep, a shallow wound, but good enough.

Avion's newly-paralyzed second wing comes toward him - Avion is going to flip over as it dies, taking Wander with it--

UNDER THE WATER

In the darkness, Wander swims to get out from underneath Avion's colossal body before it drowns him. Once free of it, he watches as Avion's body falls into the depths, the light in its eyes flickering and going out.

But past the curtain of bubbles, Hydrus awaits.

Wander swims toward the surface.

Hydrus follows.

ON THE SURFACE

Wander breaks through, gasping, as Hydrus emerges with him.

The colossus aims its head at Wander, and dives at him.

Wander swims aside, lets him dive, and notices that:

The sigil is located between Hydrus' electrified spikes, and his bow is hooked around one of them.

Wander grabs onto Hydrus' tail, pulled along with it under the water.

Hydrus dives down to drown Wander.

Wander loses grip, and sight of Hydrus in the dark water.

WANDER'S POV

Wander looks around frantically - where is it?! He's disoriented. Everything is too murky and indistinct.

Behind him, the glowing eyes and spikes get closer and closer, until the spike zaps him.

Wander, in extreme pain, flails enough to get away from the spike, but then notices his bow hooked around the spike - and manages to grab hold of it, using it as a handle.

Wander climbs along the coiling, twisting spine, toward the electrified spikes. He grabs a hold of the bow, using it as a handle.

The tendrils of darkness from Avion lurch at Wander, breaking through the electrified spike the bow is hooked onto, to enter Wander's body.

Hydrus REACTS to the loss of its spike, halting its dive.

This gives Wander just enough opportunity to hook the bow on the other spike, and push his sword into the sigil. Black blood clouds the water, and envelopes him in darkness.

BLACKOUT.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT - REMINISCENCE

In the orange glow of torchlight, the Warrior is now watching menacingly in a crowd of merry villagers as:

Wander and Mono kneel together on a platform.

They're wearing the vestments and white dress, respectively - wedding garb.

Behind them stands Lord Emon.

And in front of them is an old SHAMANESS.

The Shamaness has an array of beads, stones, plants, and incense on a small altar. She takes Wander's hand.

SHAMANESS

Great love, and great sorrow do I
see. On the field of combat, you
shall fell great foes.

Wander and Mono's faces cloud - they exchange uncomfortable glances. Then the Shamaness takes Mono's hand.

The Shamaness frowns, confused, then drops Mono's hand like she's been burned.

WANDER

What is it, Shamaness?

The Shamaness rises, backing up, terrified.

SHAMANESS

You... you will be the mother of a demon!

Horrified gasps from everyone now.

Wander and Mono are stunned. Lord Emon steps forward.

LORD EMON

Explain.

The Shamaness tries to compose herself. She's still shaking.

SHAMANESS

The one who profanes the sanctity of life and death has marked her for its own: *Dormin*.

LORD EMON

That old Shadow was locked in the Forbidden Lands, untold ages ago.

SHAMANESS

Lord Emon, I saw what I saw. I know not how, but it shall come to pass.

Lord Emon considers this. He looks at the uncomprehending bride and groom.

LORD EMON

...The Shadow is cunning. We cannot allow it to escape its prison.

Lord Emon turns his back on them, sadly.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

...I am sorry.

Lord Emon beckons at the Warrior.

The Warrior comes forward.

WANDER

Lord Emon?!

The masked clerics surround Wander, and pull him forcefully from the platform.

Mono starts to get up, trembling, but Lord Emon and the Shamaness take her hands, and pull her down to the altar.

Wander fights off the clerics, climbs the platform, and blocks the Warrior's sword with his own.

But then Wander hears a sickening sound behind him: he turns, and sees Lord Emon pull a ceremonial knife from Mono's back. She slumps forward on the altar.

Wander kneels, distraught, and cradles Mono's dying form.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Mono... no please... I do not have your skill...

Wander looks at the Shamaness desperately.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Please, help her!

The Shamaness stares back, her expression pained but resolutely neutral.

SHAMANESS

...It is done.

He looks from the Shamaness to Lord Emon, blanched with shock and horror.

WANDER

Why...? Why would you do this? No trial, no deliberation of the council?!

LORD EMON

You are not on the council. And you are not the leader of this tribe. If I sent you to war, as you once wished, you would kill upon my orders without question - for you would trust my judgement that their deaths are for the good of all.

WANDER

You would lecture me, even now as she dies?!!

Lord Emon stays steady, intense.

LORD EMON

...You have no right to question me on matters that are not yours to understand nor contend with.

WANDER

I have every right! You would
murder an innocent woman on her own
wedding night, in front of the
entire village!

The villagers of the assembled crowd react to this accusation
incredulously.

LORD EMON

Careful, boy.

Mono chokes on blood, shudders, and goes still.

SHAMANESS

She has passed on to the light.
This world troubles her no more.

WANDER

YOU MURDERED MY WIFE!

SHAMANESS

He *saved* your wife! Can you not
understand, boy, that it is worse
to live as a demon's pawn than to
pass, pure and sinless, to the
great beyond?!

LORD EMON

As you said, all have borne
witness. This deed was not done in
shadow. Who here believes I have
done wrong?

Wander, through tears, looks out over the crowd.

Most of them avoid Wander's gaze, shifting uncomfortably. All
of them are silent, and make no motion toward Wander.

Wander is delirious with grief, choking on his words:

WANDER

He murdered her... you saw... why
do you say and do nothing, you
cowards?

The warrior knocks him on the head with the pommel of his
sword. Wander slumps unconscious.

The warrior is silhouetted in the torchlight, looming over
the fallen forms of Wander and Mono.

EXT. LAKE - FORBIDDEN LANDS - DAY

Wander, unconscious, is lifted up from the water.

He seems to be on a tiny round pedestal of green moss, ringed with glowing stones resembling molar teeth.

His eyes open:

On one of the teeth, the hazy form of ghost-Mono sits. She is exclaiming her excitement that he is awake, but there is no sound. She steps toward him but then stops, intimidated:

Three of the humanoid shadows watch him. They fade from view, as does Mono.

Wander coughs out a lung's worth of water, getting up. He notices the platform-island is moving.

He looks down, and sees:

He is on a bull-like quadruped colossus, walking in the shallows. PELAGIA. It has no eyes, but its horns glow blue.

The colossus tosses his head, trying to throw him onto the sandy shore.

Wander holds on, looks at the glowing stones - a weak point?

Wander hits one with his sword. It's not solid stone, and they reverberate.

The colossus turns toward the one he hit, stumbling that way and taking it away from the shore.

Interesting - Wander tries it again with another stone, and sure enough, he's steering the colossus.

Wander steers toward a raised, circular platform in the middle of the lake, level with Pelagia's head pedestal.

As he nears it, Pelagia's horns turn orange, and energy shoots from them at the platform.

The bottom of the platform is damaged, and the whole top tilts dangerously. One more strike, and it will not stand.

Wander realizes that there is a faint blue glow escaping the moss on Pelagia's palate.

Wander tears away the moss, and reveals... A SIGIL.

He stabs it, and Pelagia bellows. Wander jumps onto the platform, next to what looks like a fallen pillar.

Then he sees... eyes. Blue eyes looking at him sideways. The stone face of a humanoid Colossus. The colossus rises...

The stone pillar is actually the creature's arm, shaped like a long stone sword.

The other arm is shorter, and ends in the shape of a pommel.

The face is covered in a stone mask. This is GAIUS.

Standing at his full 100-ft height, Gaius pulls back his sword-arm, preparing for a strike.

Wander runs, holding his sword aloft - the beam leads the creature's head. But it must be behind the stone mask, because there is no sign of the sigil.

The sword crashes down, shaking the earthen platform. The colossus may be slow to strike, but he's powerful.

Wander nears a stone circle in the center of platform. It's like the reinforced center of a buckler shield.

Which, indeed, is how the arena is shaped.

Wander stands, and waits for another swing from the giant.

Waits... even as its shadow approaches....

As the pillar-sword nearly ends its downward arc atop him, Wander rolls out of the way... and the sword hits the stone.

The impact sends a shockwave of tremors through the stone giant, and his stone mask crumbles... revealing the sigil.

Wander takes the opportunity, while he's stunned, to run up the sword, and jumps onto his furry midsection. Gripping pieces of stone armor, he makes his ascent.

The giant colossus stabs at him with the pommel-hand.

Some of the armor bits crumble off.

Those bits fall past Wander to the giant's feet below. Wander knows he has to be careful: might be him falling next.

He makes it to the broad shoulders, then the head... the giant leans forward to scrape him off his furry scalp.

Wander is hanging by a handful of fur. He stabs upward into the sigil, and the creature's head rains black blood.

Wander scrambles back atop the creature's head as it face-plants into the earth.

Wander falls onto the giant's furry back, spreading his arms wide and closes his eyes. He embraces what is coming, a brief moment of respite.

Tendrils shoot up from the body of Pelagia in the lake...

...and from the sigil of Gaius' crown.

They plunge into Wander, and his vision fades to the tunnel of white light in the darkness. A soft, feminine murmuring, but it is muffled, distant, unintelligible.

Wander yells desperately, but no sound comes out.

The form of Mono steps out from the light, her hair whipping around, but she clearly sees Wander.

Wander is hopeful, reaching out to her.

She reaches out too.

She steps out, a bare foot into the darkness.

But then the arms of the humanoid shadows grasp Wander, holding him back.

Mono yells, and manages to get one barely-audible word past the distortion of this limbo-world:

MONO

...Wander!!

The shadows pull him into the darkness.

EXT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP - FORBIDDEN LANDS - LATE DAY

Mono's pale face, wind softly blowing her raven locks.

Lord Emon approaches her, his clerics behind him. A flurry of white feathers enters the cathedral ceiling--

--and 5 white doves alight around her altar. In the landscape beyond, 5 pillars of light connect the earth and sky.

LORD EMON

...That foolish apostate. He will
doom us all.

(to his men)

We are too late to stop him from
unsealing the vessels.

Lord Emon looks down the hall at:

--the statues, 5 of which are now nothing but rubble.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

It has already begun. But he has not unsealed them all, not yet. He may yet fall to the remaining guardians, but we cannot leave it to chance. Make haste, and ready my horse.

ACOLYTE

But where shall he go next, so that we may overtake him in time?

Lord Emon looks out at:

A dark storm brewing over the mountains.

LORD EMON

I know where he will be at the last. And that is all that matters.

The light dims on the grasses.

It dims on the stone steps of the shrine.

A shadow passes over Mono's pale face.

MONO (V.O.)

Wander...

EXT. LAKE - FORBIDDEN LANDS - LATE DAY

The storm is far from where--

--Wander, slumped forward in his saddle, rides Agro down a broken ramp spiraling away from the platform.

He thinks he sees:

Mono, standing in the placid lake.

She turns to him, sadly.

MONO

Wander... hurry...

One of the jumps almost causes Wander to fall, until he catches himself. He looks again over the lake:

Mono's ghostly apparition is gone. Dormin's voice comes back, but its male voice has grown louder while its female voice is fading:

DORMIN

Thy next foe is... deep within the forest... a shadow that crawls on the walls...

WANDER

Old shade, have you no pity? I am mortal only. Give me but a moment's peace...

He tries to lift the sword to the light, fails. He has almost no strength left, and sunset approaches.

He sees an umbral glade, trusts that this is where he's meant to go, and weakly spurs Agro on with his heel.

EXT. FOREST - FORBIDDEN LANDS - DUSK

The sun hangs low.

Wander travels through the umbral glade, through streams, and tunnel caves.

There are fruit trees here, and a stone shrine which looks like a small replica of the Shrine of Worship.

Wander, starving, takes the lowest-hanging fruit and digs in. Closes his eyes, savoring.

He sees a lizard, about the size of an iguana, staring down at him from the ledge of the stone shrine. It has a glowing white tail.

Wander grabs it, and the lizard wriggles away, leaving its still-twitching tail behind.

Wander, without thinking, snatches up the tail and bites into it like a ravenous wolf.

He realizes it does not taste all that great, not like this. He exchanges looks with Agro.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - FORBIDDEN LANDS - NIGHT

Wander holds the tail over a small fire with a wood spit.

Wander eats this with all the more pleasure, as he had to wait longer for it. He looks a little better, stronger.

EXT. FORBIDDEN LANDS - DAY

Wander finds:

A PAGODA-STYLE TEMPLE

On a small island in the middle of a lagoon.

Wander walks through the shallow, clear water. It is quite beautiful.

He looks inside the darkness of the temple entrance, and enters it.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT - REMINISCENCE

A sky of countless glittering stars, and a moon.

The moonlight shines down on Wander's village, as Wander makes his way to the village temple.

INT. TEMPLE - VILLAGE - NIGHT

Wander climbs in through the temple window.

This temple is filled with relics from the forbidden lands.

Spooky images are engraven and painted upon the walls: of a shadow with an army of pale humans rising from their graves.

On the bottom pedestal is the sword that Wander wields in the Forbidden Lands.

Guards with torches guard the entrance. Wander keeps an eye on them, warily.

He carefully and quietly scales down the wall, avoiding the relics lining the walls. He bumps a mask, making a sound--

--but a guard below yawns. They're half asleep, didn't hear.

Wander makes it to the bottom of the temple shaft, and approaches the sword. Hesitantly, carefully, he takes it.

The blade hums with power, gleams with a cold blue light, reflecting his terrified face. We fall into this reflection--

INT. TEMPLE - FORBIDDEN LANDS - PRESENT

-- which becomes the current Wander, as he warily traverses halls lit with braziers.

This temple is built many tiers deep into the earth.

Wander sees a dying brazier, with too little wood to keep it fueled, stops to wonder at it, when... a piece of firewood drops into it from--

ABOVE

Where a silhouetted, bestial-looking creature stares at him from a balcony, eyes already orange. Wander is a trespasser, and this is a temple guardian. Its name is CELOSIA.

The colossus, heavily armored, shaped like a tusked lion but the size of an elephant, leaps down to Wander's level, facing him and prowling toward him.

Wander runs, but this colossus is terrifyingly fast. It charges after him, and he's forced to drop to the ground and let the colossus run over the top of him.

The colossus runs into a brazier, knocking a flaming stick of firewood kindling out of the basin.

Celosia jumps back, like a frightened cat, from the stick.

Wander runs forward, seizes the ready-made torch.

Celosia backs away, into the shadows.

This is working - until the torch flame smolders out.

Celosia goes back on the attack, and Wander runs as fast as he can for the brazier.

He dives between the stone pedestal and the wall, Celosia clawing after him.

It rakes its stone claws against his leg, ripping bloody gashes into his flesh. Wander sharply sucks in air.

Wander dips the torch into the brazier, and lights it anew.

He strikes the torch on Celosia's furry claw, which sizzles painfully, and the great cat withdraws with a cry.

Wander emerges from the recesses of the brazier pedestal, and brandishes the torch aggressively at Celosia.

Celosia cowers, and Wander forces it further, toward--

A BALCONY

Of this tier of the temple. It is a long drop to the next.

Wander keeps forcing Celosia back, until its back claw finds the edge.

Celosia looks between the ledge and Wander in desperation, but if it desires mercy, it won't get any from Wander.

Wander charges forward with the torch, and Celosia tumbles off the balcony ledge.

The impact of the fall shatters Celosia's armor, and reveals its sigil.

Wander leaps off the cliff, and plunges his sword into the sigil of Celosia's hide.

Wander absorbs the tendrils, sitting with his eyes closed as if in prayer. But then his eyes slowly open.

He still stands. He wasn't knocked completely out, as before. He seems to be building an immunity to the darkness.

MONO (V.O.)

Wander... Wander, where have you gone?

WANDER (V.O.)

I am here Mono.

He looks up at the cliff, and sees her form flickering in the abandoned torchlight.

WANDER

You are the one who is gone. But not for much longer.

On this lower level, he finds a courtyard, shaped like a coliseum. He looks past a coliseum window:

DOWN

In the grass of the courtyard, a giant lizard-like colossus waits, its legs glowing with sigil-marks. KURUMORI.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Like shooting a lizard in a pail.

Wander draws his bow, knocking an arrow. He lets it fly--

--right at its back leg. But the gigantic tail swats it out of the air.

With frightening speed it turns, runs up the wall, looks at him with huge, orange eyes, and shoots a ball of orange flame from its mouth. He dodges, and runs down the circular hall, Kuromori spitting fire through every window behind him.

Wander leaps through the window, as it belches flame. He climbs down. Kuromori sees him, follows.

Wander escapes into the hall of a different tier. Keeps running till he reaches a broken section.

Kuromori hasn't spotted him yet. He shoots an arrow-

And it hits the sigil of one Kuromori's legs, spewing black blood and causing the sigil to disappear.

Kuromori instantly retaliates with a blast of fire. Wander runs... toward Kuromori.

Kuromori does not expect this, nor does it expect the sword plunging through the window into one of its marked legs. The marks fade, and Kuromori loses its grip. Wander is pulled by the lodged sword, through the window--

-- down to the courtyard grass below. Wander slashes at the other two legs in a single arc, releasing black blood.

Wander stands, drenched in black blood, on the belly of the fallen colossus as its eye-lights go out.

The black tendrils rise up from all four legs, and cocoon a cold, emotionless Wander in darkness.

EXT. TEMPLE - FORBIDDEN LANDS - NIGHT - PRESENT

Wander walks deliberately out of the pagoda temple.

He passes Agro.

WANDER

Agro. Come.

Agro sees that Wander has seven distinct shadows in the fire light, but then the fire is snuffed out.

EXT. PLATEAU - VILLAGE - NIGHT - REMINISCENCE

Wander traverses the steps up a mountain plateau overlooking the village. The cold wind is making him shiver.

On the plateau, wrapped bodies are placed in the scaffold branches of leafless trees. Sky-burial.

Agro, without bridle or saddle, stands forlorn at the bottom of the tree, notices Wander approach.

Wander climbs the tree, gets to the top.

Dark birds are convened on the newest body, unwrapping it with their beaks. Wander waves them away.

He gazes at the face of his dead beloved, then covers her with the ornamental shroud.

Wander carries Mono's body slowly down the tree, past Agro.

He is about to carry her down the steps, when he hears a plaintive whinny.

He turns to see Agro step toward him. Wander's gaze goes directly to--

THE GASH

Inflicted by the warrior's bull. It has healed due to Mono's skill, but it will never be gone - the scar is still large and noticeable on Agro's shoulder.

Agro kneels down.

Wander places the body on Agro's bare back. Caresses the horse's muzzle, the scar that links Agro also to Mono...

Wander lets the tears he's been holding back fall.

Then he realizes that Agro seems to be waiting. She has not arisen yet.

Unsure, he climbs atop her back. Agro does not shake him off.

Agro rises, and with one last look back at him holding Mono, begins her solemn march

-- down the plateau steps, toward the village. Though the horse cannot know or understand Wander's plans to cheat death and bring Mono back, they are inexplicably united in purpose.

THE VILLAGE

Is asleep - all the lights are out, not a sound emanating from their dwellings. However--

IN LORD EMON'S DWELLING

Filled with the shells of tortoises - bigger ones as shields, smaller ones as ritual rattles - Lord Emon is experiencing a sleepless night, tossing and turning on his bedding.

This is the first time we have seen him without his mask, which lies next to him - his is an old, careworn face, even more haggard now from anxiety and insomnia.

He hears soft hoofbeats outside, looks out of his doorway:

Wander rides past slowly, on Agro. Carrying Mono's body.

Lord Emon emerges from the darkness of his dwelling.

In the dim light, without his mask or robes of office, he is a small, hunched-over figure, vulnerable - not the inscrutable figure of authority figure he usually is.

Wander is deep in the turmoil of his thoughts, when he hears:

LORD EMON (O.S.)

Wander.

Wander tugs gently at Agro's mane, causing her to halt.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

Why disturb your beloved's rest?

Wander makes no attempt to answer or look back at him.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

You do her a dishonor. Her body is nothing; her soul is ready to depart. To ascend to the skies, and be at peace with her ancestors. If you cling to her mortal shell, her soul will linger on the earth for your sake.

WANDER

...Good.

LORD EMON

I understand the pain you must feel. The bitterness. Hatred, even. I do not blame you for these feelings.

WANDER

Your sympathy is wasted upon me.

LORD EMON

I do not ask for your forgiveness. If I suffer a heavy heart for what has been taken from you, it is a price I pay willingly, and would do so again.

WANDER

You paid no price. *She* did. To quell your fears of an ancient monster. Was leaving the Forbidden Land to live here for untold ages, amongst the mud and stone, not enough? Must you cower like a child, afraid of the dark after a nightmare?

Lord Emon's face hardens.

LORD EMON

...You are grieving. You know not of what you speak. Tomorrow, I pray, you will see the light of reason.

Wander turns to glare back at him.

WANDER

I see clearer now than ever before. I do not ask for your forgiveness either, old man. If you desired me to blindly follow your 'wisdom', you made a grave error in refusing my service.

LORD EMON

It was blindness I saw. That is why I did not want you to become a cleric. You do not understand what it is to sacrifice.

WANDER

No. You did the sacrificing for me. Had I done the deed, I would have looked her in the eyes.

Lord Emon watches a turtle slowly cross the dirt path.

LORD EMON

An individual life is fleeting; our happiness even more so. The tribe, the land, the world, these can be eternal... so long as we protect them. No single man or woman is worth endangering the eternal.

WANDER

If you would destroy that which is worth living for and protecting, then I want not your 'eternity': for you speak of hell.

Wander issues a commanding cry and spurs Agro forward.

She gallops away, leaving a trail of dust... but through the cloud is a glint of blue light.

Lord Emon squints, glances at the moon - senses there was something odd about that reflection.

He almost goes back inside, but then stops.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE

Lord Emon, now in his mask and robes, startles the guards with his sudden presence.

The guards let him--

INSIDE

Offering their torches for light. Lord Emon looks around.

LORD EMON'S POV

Everything in place, nothing looks amiss... wait. The sword. It looks wrong, shabby.

Lord Emon picks up the sword and inspects it: a crude sword. Wander's practice weapon. It has been left in place of the sacred sword relic.

He turns to them.

LORD EMON
Who has entered?

The guards exchange glances.

GUARD 1
None but you, Lord Emon.

Lord Emon strides out.

LORD EMON
Come with me. You will remedy this mistake by helping me catch the thief.

GUARD 2
But who shall guard the temple?

LORD EMON

Naught remains worth guarding.
Naught may remain at all, if we do
not return the sacred sword.

EXT. GEYSER FIELD - FORBIDDEN LANDS - DAY - PRESENT

Wander trudges, zombie-like, across--

--a dry, cracked field. The air is dark, grey, and scattered about are the burnt and blackened remains of trees.

Geysers of water blast up from the parched earth.

Agro is spooked, but Wander is focused on putting one foot in front of the other.

He holds up the sword, listlessly - there isn't enough light, with all the dark vapor and dust in this valley, for the sword to reflect any light and provide a guiding beam. He lowers it, glumly.

Then, in a cave, the eyes of a colossus glow. BASARAN. It opens and shoots lasers from its maw.

The lasers hit the ground near Wander. A warning shot. Wander jumps on Agro's back.

Wander rides Agro straight at the colossus, dodging the lasers. Then Wander pulls the reins, and veers away. Baiting the colossus to leave its place of protection.

It works: Basaran emerges from the cave, stretching its spider-crab like legs. It has a huge, armored shell.

Wander rides Agro zigzag fashion through the field, avoiding laser blasts and geyser blasts alike.

Wander scans the field: which geyser is going to go off?

Wander senses rumbling in the earth, consistent, not from the movements of the colossus. He follows it to the source with his gaze:

The hole of a major geyser is already starting to have water rumble and bubble to its surface. It blasts upward.

More rumbling, in a different direction. He turns Agro that way, racing toward it.

The colossus follows, lumbering. Wander is stressed - will the timing work out?

Wander stops Agro near the impending geyser, waits for a laser-blast to be forthcoming, then races forward.

Basaran's belly is now over the geyser.

Wander abruptly wheels Agro around, rides to the side of Basaran, and underneath the underbelly, avoiding its pillar-like legs as it tries to turn.

Agro is jumpy and panicked. Wander reins her in sternly.

WANDER

Quiet, Agro. Trust me.

Basaran's legs fold. It's going to squish them underneath the weight of its own body.

Wander sees the underbelly come toward them...

BOOM. The Geyser blasts upward, sending the crab-tortoise colossus reeling into the air away from Wander and Agro.

The flailing limbs have glowing spots, on the bottom 'feet'.

Wander takes out his bow, fires an arrow at the feet as he rides out from underneath Basaran.

The geyser dies down, and Basaran falls forward hard. It cannot get up on its useless forelegs.

Wander jumps from Agro to the creature's head, where he stabs the glowing sigil.

Black blood, tendrils swirl through the air... but this time it is very apparent that Wander is getting stronger, intoxicated by the dark essence.

As he descends from the dead colossus, Agro backs away.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Come, Agro. We are almost there.

Wander tries to approach Agro, but she rears. He grabs her reins, pulling her down.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Agro, please! Stop this. I am not your enemy.

Wander holds onto the fidgeting Agro.

WANDER (CONT'D)

They were wrong. She was not the one with the cursed fate. I was.

(MORE)

WANDER (CONT'D)

Now I embrace damnation so she may
live again. You may abandon me
then, Agro. Not before.

Agro snorts, and reluctantly follows.

EXT. DESERT - OUTSIDE VILLAGE - DAY - REMINISCENCE

Wander is riding, parched, through desert sands with Mono's
body in his lap.

Agro has no saddle, reins, nothing. Wander didn't bring
anything with him except the sacred sword and Mono's body.

He sees a tan-colored, bumpy line arcing its way through the
dunes, obscured by the heat-haze.

He wipes stinging sweat from his eyes, looks again:

Nothing. A mirage?

He spurs the horse onward.

Agro's hooves sink into the sand.

He loses his grip on Mono, who slips from his grasp and onto
the sand.

He dismounts in a panic, scooping her up, but then realizes:

Riders of camels with sand-protecting scarves have surrounded
him. Members of the rival SAND-TRIBE.

SAND-TRIBE RIDER

You are from the village. The one
made of mud and sticks.

WANDER

...No longer.

SAND-TRIBE RIDER

What are you doing out here alone?
And on such a big horse, when you
are such a small young boy, unfit
to ride her? And what of the girl?
Is she sick?

WANDER

She is dead.

The Sand-Tribe riders exchange looks.

SAND-TRIBE RIDER

Your horse is about to die. You are about to die. If you wished so badly to join her, you could have died closer to home, and all had a proper burial together. Why bring her out here?

Wander closes his eyes. He has to chance it.

WANDER

... What do you know of the Forbidden Lands?

Again the Sand-Tribe riders look uncertain.

SAND-TRIBE RIDER

Only what its name suggests: it is forbidden. Is that not enough?

WANDER

Not if you want to get there.

The Sand-Tribe rider dismounts.

He kneels, removes his face scarf.

SAND-TRIBE RIDER

The girl is special to you?

WANDER

(nods)
She was to be my wife.

SAND-TRIBE RIDER

Is this Lord Emon's doing?

WANDER

The girl, yes. My journey to the Forbidden Lands, no.

The Sand-Tribe rider smiles.

SAND-TRIBE RIDER

And Lord Emon would be frightful upset if you made it to the Forbidden Lands, I gather?

WANDER

He already is. He pursues me as we speak. And he will not be alone.

SAND-TRIBE RIDER

We will not fight your battle for you. We will let them pass, as we shall do for you. But we will give them nothing.

The Sand-Tribe rider motions to the rider with the supplies.

There is a drinking skin, which he tosses to Wander.

Wander catches it, drinks gratefully.

And then the Sand-Tribe rider hands him rolled-up parchment.

SAND-TRIBE RIDER (CONT'D)

You will need to know where you are going, or else we will have to escort you all the way there.

Wander unrolls it, and sees his first glimpse of the Forbidden Lands.

A saddle and reins are plopped down in the sand beside him.

SAND-TRIBE RIDER (CONT'D)

And this is so neither of you fall off that big horse of yours.

Wander looks at him in amazement.

WANDER

Why are you doing this? Does your hate of Lord Emon run so deep you would give such valuable gifts to an enemy?

SAND-TRIBE RIDER

We are not your enemy; you have not taken up the sword against us, and never shall. And yes, while it does give me joy to thwart the old tortoise, the reason is not hate.

WANDER

And what is?

The rider mounts his camel.

SAND-TRIBE RIDER

The same as what drives you. Yours is a love story, and that is my favorite kind.

(MORE)

SAND-TRIBE RIDER (CONT'D)

I may never know its ending, but I
want to believe it will be a happy
one. May you find what you seek.

The riders trot off into the dunes.

Clouds of fine sand, kicked up by the wind, obscure the path
between them and Wander.

DORMIN (V.O.)

*Thy next foe is... The vast desert
lands... A giant trail drifts
through the sky... Thou art not
alone...*

EXT. DESERT - FORBIDDEN LANDS - DAY - PRESENT

Wander now hesitates on the edge of the geyser-field.

His feet toe the line, just where cracked earth becomes--
--a desert.

WANDER (V.O.)

*I swore to myself I would never set
foot upon sand ever again, unless
it would be to make the crossing
with a living Mono... now here am
I, upon different but all too
similar ground.*

Wander forces himself to walk into the desert sand, hating
every step.

WANDER (V.O.)

*...But we could never show our
faces in the village again. Perhaps
the sand-dwellers would be kindly
enough to take us in... No. The
sands are no place for people. The
Forbidden Land may be our home
forevermore... I will ask Mono what
she thinks, once she wakes.*

Wander ambles by red and limestone rock structures, some
natural, some part of half-buried temple walls and arches so
old and weather-worn they blend in with the natural stone.

Wander stops and looks at Agro.

WANDER

Agro... do you think she will
understand?

(MORE)

WANDER (CONT'D)

Will she forgive my sins, all of
which I committed for her sake?

Agro looks at him dubiously, as if to say 'Why are you asking me? I am a horse.'

WANDER (CONT'D)

Yes. You are right. It is no use
trying to predict what she will do.
But she will be angry, that is for
certain.

A shadow blocks the sun. Wander stares up at:

A GIANT SANDSTONE SNAKE

With many strange wing-like blades and pumping lungs/hearts
of gas trapped in membranous sacs, gliding over him. This is
the colossus PHALANX.

It's very graceful, silent, serene. It does not seem to be
coming for him - in fact, it seems to be completely
disregarding him. Its eyes are glowing blue.

Wander steadies his bow--

--and shoots the gas lung-hearts. One after another.

There is a faint, wailing cry. Wander is so tired, he
performs this task like one sleep-walking.

The wings alone, without the help of the gas sacs, cannot
keep the creature aloft - the creature drifts downward.

Phalanx lands glides through the sand instead of the air, its
prow-like beak parting the sand like ocean waves, its wings
helping move both its body and the surrounding sand.

The displaced sand arcs in great fountain-like spurts toward
Wander, but they do not hit him. The great sand-snake
colossus is simply trying to get away.

Wander whistles.

Agro, who has been lagging behind, gallops to meet up with
Wander. Wander throws himself astride Agro without breaking
her stride.

They race alongside Phalanx, which to our eyes would resemble
a runaway train.

Agro gets close enough, between the spewing displaced sands
and wings - Wander jumps onto the side, climbing up the
ridges of a dorsal-fin.

The dorsal-fin closes shut, but not before Wander sees the briefest glimpse of a glowing sigil. He tries lifting it, but the fin-flap is shut tight.

Phalanx buries its face into the sand, burrowing down.

Wander runs along its bumpy, spiny tail, jumping off as it disappears into the sand.

Wander is now in the middle of the desert, and the colossus could be anywhere.

He tries to feel the vibrations.

There's definite rumbling somewhere in the sand.

He looks around - no way to tell from what direction the colossus might come. Wander spots:

A NEARBY CAVE.

Deciding quickly, Wander mounts Agro, racing toward the cave. The ground shakes even more behind them.

Phalanx raises its head, its huge eyes glowing orange. It is ready for a counterattack. It is right on their heels, or hooves, as they enter

THE CAVE

The cave aperture is narrower than its body, but it goes barreling right through.

Wander shoots arrows behind him at--

Both eyes, in quick succession. A squealing sound, as stone eyelids close down over the eyes.

Phalanx buries into the sand.

Wander does not have much time to be relieved, as--

RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM

A gaping, toothy, fire-glowing maw opens, ready to swallow him whole.

Wander pulls back on the reins sharply to prevent Agro from running right into the colossus' jaws, then abruptly to the side as Phalanx leaps, striking at him like a viper.

Wander races toward a natural pillar of stone, passing it tightly - Phalanx clearly hits it and goes through it, as it shatters from the ground up and then crumbles.

Sharp stalactites are knocked loose, raining down upon:

Wander, upon Agro - they dodge as best they can.

Phalanx surfaces, writhing and barrel-rolling about. With its pierced sacs exposed to air, however, the membrane rapidly heals, and fills with brand-new gas.

Wander and Agro barely make it out of the widened cave aperture, when a boulder thunders down to block it forever, followed by the collapse of the entire cave.

OUTSIDE

As soon as they reach the dunes again, Phalanx rises out RIGHT UNDERNEATH THEM.

Agro is now, for the first time, up with Wander atop a colossus, and she is not liking it, legs splayed wide to keep her footing. Especially as they ascend into the air.

Wander carefully dismounts the panicking horse. He sees:

The dorsal fins are crucial in the air for steering, and are up, revealing the glowing sigils.

Wander falls into the sigil with a stab. Black blood. Phalanx writhes, and wails.

Agro whinnies, terrified, unsure what to do - but then that section of the flying worm controlled by the sigil stiffens, paralyzed. Agro is on a (more) stable surface now.

Wander quickly goes to the next one, the flap reflexively closing, but he stabs upward to prop it open, slides onto his back, braces with his legs, pulls the sword out, and stabs down into the sigil.

Last one, this one behind its head-fin. Wander almost stabs it, then sees:

THE VIEW AHEAD

He raises the sword, and the light gathers toward a storm in the distant mountains. When Phalanx's head is aimed straight for it--

--Wander stabs down, locking Phalanx's course as his life ebbs away.

The black tendrils enter Wander, as he rests against the fin-crown of the dead Phalanx.

Where the black tendrils are, Mono can be seen, as if they are tears into the limbo-world where her soul resides. She sits there, just on the other side, watching Wander.

Wander catches her image, and locks gazes with her.

Mono tries to reach through the tendrils, but it is a solid barrier of flowing energy.

Wander puts his hand against the stream, overlapping where her hand rests on the other side.

They aren't touching, but they can feel the vibration of the other's presence, just out of reach.

Phalanx slowly and somberly floats in its course toward the mountains, like a funeral-barge in the sky, in silence.

Phalanx's nose hits the side of the mountain, stopping it.

Wander reaches over the side of the colossus, and punctures the front gas-sac of the colossus's underbelly with his sword. A soft hiss as the gas escapes.

Phalanx's head droops, low enough that Wander is able to disembark to a near ledge.

Agro pauses on the back of the listing colossus-craft. Wander whistles, and Agro very cautiously follows.

They follow the mountain path, leaving the colossus's body to sway like a mournful ribbon caught on the breeze. A beam of light rises from its dulled major sigil into the heavens.

They come across a ravine with a bridge - large, though not as large as the one gracing the passage into the Forbidden Lands. Before they can get close:

LORD EMON

(O.S.)

Wander.

Wander turns, sees--

Lord Emon, surrounded by his posse of acolytes.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

Not only did you steal the sword
and trespass upon this cursed land,
you performed the forbidden ritual.
But it is not too late. Dormin
cannot manifest completely if even
one seal remains.

Wander processes that - *manifests*.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

Yes. Do you see now? Do not let Dormin enter the world of human mortals again, after so much was sacrificed to banish and contain it. We are but playthings in its eyes. Atone now, my son, and you will be forgiven.

The acolytes ready their crossbows.

Wander steels himself...

WANDER

I am not your son.

... and spurs his horse.

Lord Emon is alarmed, as the acolytes take aim.

LORD EMON

Do not let him get away! HURRY!
BRING HIM DOWN!!

Crossbow bolts rattle on the bridge as Agro outpaces their shots, crossing it. But then...

The stones on the other end come loose, and cracks snake toward them.

The bridge is falling apart.

Wander's eyes widen - they're not going to make it. He looks back at the clerics behind him. Can't go back. Trapped.

Time slows for Wander. He's so close, but now certain doom and failure looms ahead of him, pressing in around him oppressively. Fear steals his breath away.

Agro pushes on, going faster even without input from the fear-paralyzed Wander. She's determined now.

At the very end, the bridge gives out completely.

Agro can go no further. But she can do the very first thing she did with Wander, but this time for a very different reason: she bucks him off.

Wander is thrown forward, over Agro's head--

And lands on the other side, as Agro goes down with the collapsing bridge.

Wander looks over the cliff with horror.

WANDER

AGRO!!!!

He sees Agro disappear with the bridge rubble, into the ravine far below.

Lord Emon's men reload.

Wander turns and runs, but for him, time is slow once more. Like every movement is an effort, a great force of will.

Eventually, his flight brings him behind the cover of the mountainside, safe from the arrows. He slumps down.

Thunder. The shadow of the storm clouds right overhead. Rain.

Wander is getting drenched.

The mud, blood and grime dried onto his flesh are being turned into dark rivulets, like free-flowing wounds.

Lightning flashes, illuminating a stone passageway built through the mountains.

Wander gets up, walks listlessly into the darkness.

His expression is blank. Hopeless.

INSIDE THE PASSAGEWAY

Wander finds a balcony leading to a misty, white nothingness.

There's a level above him. No obvious way up, but there's a pillar with some odd carvings. Perfect hand-holds.

Wander makes his ascent up the pillar.

AT THE TOP

Wander finds himself on a vast mesa, facing a gigantic stone door locked with a crystalline disc.

He can see the Forbidden Lands, and the 9 beams of light marking the location of each fallen colossus.

Wander raises the ancient sword - the light beams, instead of rising to the sky, instead refocus on the sword, brilliantly refracting onto the crystalline seal.

The magical mechanism reacts to the light, unlocking. The doors open with a groan.

Past the doors, the silhouette of MALUS awaits. Orange, baleful eyes in the darkness. Blazing, fiery bracelets

He appears to rise up from a ziggurat-style tower. He is on the other side of the mesa, overlooking the sea.

Malus raises a clawed finger, pointing at Wander... and fires energy from his bracelets.

This energy bolt flies straight across the mesa at Wander.

He dodges, falling into a--

PERMANENT STONE TRENCH

They snake all the way to Malus.

Wander looks past a corner of his trench wall, the way forward - another shot from Malus, Wander ducks behind the wall again as it explodes the trench tunnel floor. Going forward means exposing himself.

Wander makes a mad dash, running through the tunnel maze.

At the end is a row of stone mantlets (artillery shields), allowing him to climb out of the maze into cover. Blasts against the artillery shield. Wander can feel its heat.

He makes a run for it, toward the stone ziggurat base, as Malus reaches for him.

Wander climbs up, and round the back of the colossus. Malus struggles to see him, but it is useless - he is immobile.

Each ring of the ziggurat base is its own path he has to traverse, and jump the gaps in between. It is a long, difficult climb.

Wander breathes in laborious, ragged breaths, his muscles straining with effort and about to give out. He's too exhausted to be doing this much climbing.

Finally he gets to Malus' back. Straight up. Wander has no strength left in his fingers, and the fur is slick from the rain - he cannot maintain a grip.

Wander takes out an arrow. Stabs it into the fur. Takes out another arrow. Stabs that one a little higher up. Takes the first one out, and keeps going, to climb up Malus' back...

Onto his shoulder...

And then Malus's claw comes for him.

Wander is grabbed up, struggling as Malus inspects him.

Malus' eyes glow blue.

Wander is puzzled, but then Malus begins to dangle him upside-down, poking him. Wander swings his sword wildly.

Malus lets out a dry, dusty, rumbling laugh, very much like Dormin's - he's toying with this tiny little creature.

WANDER'S UPSIDE-DOWN POV

As Malus laughs, Wander can see that the sigil... is in Malus' mouth.

Wander swings his body, gaining momentum, and grabs hold of the lip of Malus' mouth.

Wander strikes the claw with his sword - Malus releases him, and Wander stabs into the sigil. The wound gushes black blood and tendrils.

Malus sways, and falls backward - though its legs remain firmly in the ziggurat-base.

Wander climbs out of the mouth, standing upon Malus' face.

Malus spreads its arms - accepting death. Its eyes are still blue until they flicker and go out.

Wander stands in the rain, between the colossus' eyes.

WANDER (CONT'D)

It is done.

He looks up at the sky. Nothing. Silence.

WANDER (CONT'D)

I have done as you asked. What now, Dormin?!

DORMIN

...The ritual's demise... Thy wish is granted...

Wander lets out his breath, relieved and overwhelmed. Can't believe he's made it to the end.

WANDER

Is she really alive? Can I see her?

DORMIN

*I will hasten thee to the Shine,
for time is short... and someone
now stands to get in thy way...*

A beam of light appears over Wander, engulfing him in light.

INT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP - DAY

Wander appears in the light of the ceiling, and collapses.

Lord Emon and his men are already there.

LORD EMON

Have you any idea what you've
done?!

Wander struggles to get up, convulsing - his eyes have become a pale blue, his skin ghastly pale. Horns grow from his head.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

To be reduced to such a sight...
and look:

(indicates Mono)

Dormin has lied. He did not give
you back your beloved. You were
only being used.

Wander gets up, but he's little more than a walking corpse:
he shuffles toward them, hunched over.

The ancient sword scrapes against the stone floor, as he
lacks the power to lift it.

One of the archers fires his crossbow, the bolt flying--

-- into Wander's leg. He roars in pain and falls to the
ground again, black blood oozing.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

It is better to put him out of his
misery than to let him exist,
cursed as he is. Hurry up and do
it.

One of the acolytes draws his sword. He hesitates, but then
stabs Wander right through the torso. Black blood gushes, and
then ten black tendrils writhe out from the wound.

The acolyte startles, scuttling backward.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

He is possessed!

The black tendrils form into humanoid shadows behind Wander, who pulls the sword from his chest... then slowly, steadily, shambles toward them once more. The shadows move with him.

The shadows converge into Wander. Wander darkens, and grows...

Until he is the size of a colossus, taking up the entire cathedral hall.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

Begone, foul beast! How dare you steal the body of this boy, who you tricked into releasing you?

The voice of the colossus is now only male:

DORMIN

We have borrowed the body of this warrior... so that We may live again, after you stole Our life. Thou severed Our body into ten segments for an eternity, in order to seal away Our power... We, Dormin, have arisen anew... resurrected... now it is you who must pay the price of your deeds.

Dormin swipes at Lord Emon, sending him into a pillar. His mask breaks apart.

Dormin pounds its clawed fists at the acolytes, smashing one, as others dodge.

Lord Emon sees the ancient sword, reaches out to it.

The acolytes hack and fire at Dormin, but he's making quick work out of them. One of them spots the sword, grabs it up.

The acolyte gives Lord Emon the sword.

ACOLYTE

What do we do?

LORD EMON

Put a seal on the Shrine. Help me.

The Acolyte helps Lord Emon to his feet, and shoulders his weight all the way to:

THE POOL

At the back of the Shrine.

Lord Emon plunges the sword into the water. It lights up with a glowing sigil, and a beam of light.

Dormin roars, and continues roaring, as he shrinks.

He returns to human size, and finally looks like Wander.

Wander sees Mono, and runs toward her.

He sees her stir, and draw breath.

Tears in his eyes of joy, he reaches out for her - but then a gale of mighty wind abruptly jerks him back.

The pool has become a vortex, sucking everything in. Lord Emon is the first to be drawn in, and he goes willingly. The acolyte helping him is drawn in, then the surviving acolytes, and the dead ones too.

Wander tumbles helplessly in the air, unable to grab hold of anything.

WANDER'S POV

The silhouette of Mono as she sits up on the altar bed. He reaches out to her, but he cannot do anything.

WANDER

Mono!!

He is pulled into the watery, glowing vortex, and that is the end of his sight.

The wind stops, as Mono turns toward the sound of her name, bleary. But by the time she looks:

Everything is gone. But then... there is a cry. A baby's cry.

Mono slides off the altar. She looks around at the Shrine.

She moves toward the cry, hesitant, and finally she sees:

A LITTLE HORNED BABY BOY

Sitting in the shallow water of the pool, crying. Near him is the ancient sword.

Mono gasps, horrified.

SHAMANESS (V.O.)

You will be the mother of a demon...

Mono looks around the cathedral, sees the stone rubble.

She picks up a piece... it is the face of the Malus statue.

Mono drops the piece, faces the baby. A hard look in her eyes as she strides toward it. She pulls the sword out of the pool. Looks between it and the baby.

The baby, save for the horns, looks like any other - it is small, vulnerable, terrified. Not very demonic.

Mono positions the sword over the baby, trying to steel herself, fighting her natural inhibition against harming an infant. She must.

The baby looks at her with wide, innocent eyes.

She squeezes her eyes shut... then opens them as she hears the clip-clop of hooves--

--Behind her, from the open plains, Agro walks toward her.

MONO

Agro?

Mono lowers the sword, the baby forgotten by seeing a familiar form. She runs to Agro, hugging her.

MONO (CONT'D)

Agro! What are you doing here?
Where is Wander?

Mono startles, seeing:

Agro's eyes are an unnatural, glowing blue.

Dark tendrils issue forth from Agro's mouth, reaching out toward Mono.

Mono instinctively raises the ancient sword to block - it is successful, the tendrils are repelled by the light gleaming off the sword, and turn into dark mist.

The mist reforms, starting at the floor and growing into a dark humanoid shape... but this one has flowing hair and a gown. As it rises, a white face forms:

The face of a strangely beautiful woman. While she has no crown, she is regal... THE QUEEN. Her voice has a strange, distorted quality, echoing and booming with mysterious power.

THE QUEEN

*Lower thy sword, child... We are
not thine enemy...*

MONO

Who and what are you then?

THE QUEEN

We are the reason you now live...

Mono considers that, shocked, remembering:

SHAMANESS (V.O.)

*The one who profanes the sanctity
of life and death has marked her
for its own...*

MONO

You are... Dormin?

THE QUEEN

That is correct... We are Dormin.

MONO

...I did not know Dormin was a
woman.

THE QUEEN

*We are not a woman. Nor a man....
We are both, and yet we are
neither. This form is female...*

The Queen regards the horned baby.

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)

*...the other is male. Once We ruled
these lands, as King... and
Queen...*

MONO

...These lands. The 'Forbidden
Lands'.

THE QUEEN

*That is what you call them... they
are not forbidden to us... to us,
thine own lands are forbidden...*

MONO

And to us, you are a demon.

A dark laugh ripples through the cathedral.

The queen strokes Agro.

THE QUEEN

*Mortals are fickle... once, they
thought Us kind...*

(MORE)

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)
*a giver of life... their great
 Mother and Father...*

MONO
 What do you want from me, female
 aspect of Dormin?

THE QUEEN
*Simply to ride you... as thou would
 Agro... but inside...*

Mono reacts - what the hell does that mean?

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)
*Our presence would not be a
 hindrance, nor a burden... contents
 do not change a vessel. We merely
 require the sight of thine eyes...
 to hear with thy ears... to smell
 and touch and taste the world of
 the living once more, as an idle
 passenger. This is the least you
 can do, in return for thy
 resurrection...*

Mono lifts the sword, aiming it at The Queen.

MONO
 Then you were unwise to resurrect
 me: I did not request it, nor did I
 consent to any bargain for my life.
 Never would I have defiled the
 sanctity of life in such a way.

The Queen looks resigned.

THE QUEEN
This is true. Very well...

The Queen's shadowy, misty form floats toward the pool with
 the baby.

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)
*But another did make a bargain...
 and thus his vessel is Ours.*

The Queen picks up the baby.

Mono is alarmed.

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)
*Why do you start so? Do you fear We
 shall harm him, as thou wert
 prepared thyself to do?*

MONO

I would not suffer a demon to live.

THE QUEEN

*Worry not... thou art released from
the terrible prophecy foretold by
the old shamaness... the child
needs a mother, but We shall
suffice... you are free to go.*

A gust of wind, and a large winged creature alights on the plains outside.

It climbs the steps with bird-like claws, lithe as a cat.

The giant, horned bird-and-mammal chimera ducks through the arches to enter the cathedral. It has glowing blue eyes, and is called TRICO.

The queen blows like smoke in a sharp wind toward Trico, stopping astride him.

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)

*Fare thee well in the outside
world... We are sure thou shalt
receive a kindly welcome from those
who ended thy life....*

Trico beats its wings, taking to the air.

Mono is left with one last dark chuckle from the queen, which dies away to eerie silence.

Mono shivers, and looks at Agro.

Agro's eyes aren't glowing anymore, but now they're a pale blue, making them look dead.

MONO

What did she do to you? What did
she do to us?

OUTSIDE

Mono leads Agro down the Shrine's stone steps.

MONO (V.O.)

*I died once to prevent a cursed
fate. That was not my choice.
Perhaps it would have been, had it
been mine to make.*

When they reach the grass, she mounts. She spurs Agro with her bare heels.

Agro gallops across the plains.

Mono looks at all the possible destinations on the horizon:

-The burial mounds.

-The misty lake and tilted arena.

-The umbral forest.

-The geyser fields, and beyond it, the desert.

-The great bridge.

Mono has never seen any of these places. She's lost. Which way is out? She pulls back on the reins, halting Agro. Thinks hard, considering.

MONO (V.O.)

Now I do have a choice: do I wander aimlessly, not knowing whether my path will deliver me out of the Forbidden Lands, or further in?

Mono notices the sword, still grasped in her hand.

MONO (V.O.)

And if I do leave, what then? To whom do I go? I am dead to the village, doubly so - for my second life is an unnatural abomination.

The sword is oddly reflecting the light, refracting it into a beam aimed at--

-- the distant form of the flying creature.

MONO (V.O.)

I will die a second time; two lives wasted, for still the demon lives.

Mono's face hardens, determined.

MONO (V.O.)

My lives, and deaths, must not be in vain.

Mono spurs the horse onward with a small signal cry.

Agro breaks into a gallop, in pursuit of the creature, its rider, and the horned child.

The creature disappears from sight, into the clouds.

Mono holds the sword aloft, letting the light guide her.

EXT. WOODS - FORBIDDEN LANDS

Mono, exhausted, has stopped and is resting against Agro. Her eyes are closing, but then:

A white-tailed lizard scampers across her lap. When she startles, it freezes, looking at her.

Mono slowly reaches for it.

She strokes it's petrified head, and then withdraws her hand. The lizard turns about and takes off like a flash.

Mono smiles, and then a piece of fruit drops down near her. It is bright and tantalizingly ripe.

She picks it up, and looks at:

The fruit tree, from whence it fell.

Mono looks down at the fruit, stomach growling. She scowls, tosses aside the fruit, laying back against Agro and deciding to go to sleep, ignoring what her stomach says on the matter.

EXT. SHORE - FORBIDDEN LANDS - NIGHT

Mono dismounts on a rocky shore.

The sword's light now points to an island, a towering atoll spiraled and crowned with fortifications.

Mono searches the barren shore. The ruins speak of an ancient harbor, long lost.

She finds something buried in the rocks, sticking out - she pulls, and it is a small boat.

Mono drags a long piece of driftwood toward the boat.

She throws the driftwood and the sword inside the boat, pushes off into the waves, and jumps in.

Undead Agro watches forlornly from the shore.

Mono turns away - using the driftwood in lieu of an oar, eyes on her goal:

The looming island.

EXT. FORBIDDEN ISLAND - NIGHT

Mono rows toward a cave in the side of the island, going--

INSIDE

A long, dark tunnel.

She reaches the end, climbs out of the boat, and goes through a carved stone entryway.

INT. CATACOMBS - FORBIDDEN CASTLE - NIGHT

Mono steps into a gloomy, cavernous chamber.

Intricate, upright-standing stones are placed in recesses, in multiple tiered shelves.

Between these recesses are full-sized statues depicting armored, horned men. Mono passes by to look closer at the stones. The eyes of the statue glow blue.

As she approaches the upright stone, the lines and symbols carved into it glow blue.

She touches it... and it opens, top and sides, for it is a sarcophagus.

Mono startles back, into... an ARMORED STATUE, horns and eyes glowing malevolently. It reaches out and grabs her.

Mono struggles and fights back, but in vain. Even the ancient sword makes only harmless sparks when striking against the stone body of the statue, which does not even flinch.

It places her in the sarcophagus, which slowly closes.

MONO

NO!! PLEASE, NO!!!

MONO'S POV

The last thing she sees is the glowing blue eyes, before everything goes dark.

OVER BLACK:

The sound of Mono's panicked breathing. Suddenly, it stops. Silence. Then... loud rumbling footsteps, like a colossus. A thunderous crash of stone falling against stone as Mono cries out in fright.

STILL IN MONO'S POV:

The sarcophagus opens, and she's staring up at the castle ceiling far above.

Mono, shaken, rises to a sitting position in the sarcophagus. There are still rumbling footsteps shaking the castle.

Trico is disappearing deeper into the castle, swinging its tail. It knocked down the sarcophagus.

Mono very cautiously climbs out of the sarcophagus.

She follows Trico.

INT. TOWER - FORBIDDEN CASTLE

Mono watches as Trico goes down a hallway, but then sees:

Suspended from the tower ceiling, a spiked black-iron cage.

There is a staircase spiraling up the tower. Mono climbs up, scared what she might see--

IN THE CAGE

A scrawny BOY, no older than 15, sleeping. He is curled up, facing away from her. He's dressed very much like one of the boys from her village.

Mono climbs up further, so that she is--

-- above the top of the cage.

Mono gauges the distance, takes a breath, and jumps.

She lands on the top of the cage. The boy, awakened by the rattling of the cage, grabs hold of the bars - all that can be seen are his hands.

BOY (O.S.)
Is anybody there?

Mono realizes she cannot climb into the cage due to the spikes. She looks at the chain keeping it suspended.

Mono quails, readying the sword - and swings.

The sword hits the rusted chain, breaking one of the links.

It rocks the cage. Mono grabs hold of the weakened chain, and hits it again.

The chain breaks.

Mono screams as the cage plummets in free-fall.

It hits the castle floor, and turns over on its side, sending Mono sprawling.

Mono, stunned, gets up and watches:

A hand reaches up and grabs the padlock on the cage door, pulling it around to the inside. Sounds of something being placed in the lock, jimmying with it.

Mono walks around to peer inside the cage:

The boy is picking the lock... with one of his two *horns*.

Mono is horrified - a horned boy?!

The boy sees her, and smiles.

BOY (CONT'D)

Hello.

The lock releases, successfully picked - he tosses it aside, and stands up.

BOY (CONT'D)

Who are you?

The boy climbs out of the cage.

BOY (CONT'D)

Did you bring the cage down?

(waits for response)

Do you talk? Maybe you speak a different language...?

Mono looks down at the sword in her hand... does she use it on this boy?

BOY (CONT'D)

That is a neat sword. Have you ever killed anyone with it?

Mono levels it at him.

MONO

...Not yet.

The boy stares at her, eyes wide with shock and hurt.

BOY

...Are you here to kill *me*?

A long beat as Mono considers. She lowers the sword.

MONO

Have you always had those horns?

BOY

Yes. Why, what is wrong with them?

(peers)

Hey, where are yours at?

MONO

I do not have any. Most people do not.

BOY

I did not know that. The stone-men and Trico have horns too. The only one who does not is The Queen.

MONO

The Queen...

The boy frowns.

BOY

Actually, I do not know that for sure. She might have horns, hidden underneath that dark cloud around her head.

(smiles)

But I do not think you are weird or anything, not having horns. You look fine without them.

Mono is at a loss how to respond, trying not to like this cheery young boy.

He inclines his head toward her.

BOY (CONT'D)

No need to be scared of them - they will not hurt you. You can touch them if you want.

Mono backs up.

MONO

No, no thank you.

BOY

All right. So where do we go now?

MONO

We?

BOY

Sure. Wherever you go, I want to go as well. And help with whatever you are doing. I do not know the place very well, because I have been mostly in that cage. But I want to do and see things, and I can protect you.

Mono is incredulous.

MONO

Protect me?

Shadow humanoids rise from the floor. One grabs Mono. She startles and drops the sword.

It clatters to the floor.

The shadow pulls her into the floor - she scrambles to grab onto something. Then the boy grabs her by the hand, pulls her out, and stabs the shadow creature with the ancient sword. The shadow disperses.

Still holding onto her hand, the boy fights the other shadow creatures.

After the last is dispersed, the room is empty, and all that can be heard is the exhausted breathing of the boy and girl.

The boy releases her hand.

BOY

...Yes. Protect you.

Mono stares at him in wonder.

INT. FORBIDDEN CASTLE

They walk down the hall, keeping watch of their surroundings.

MONO

Do you have a name, boy?

BOY

No. The Queen always called me 'boy' too.

They come to the end, capped by a big stone door with the same glowing carvings as the sarcophagus.

The boy pushes against it, hits it with the sword.

Mono listens to his grunts - a combination of 'ee' and 'ko' sounds.

MONO
...How about 'Ico'.

The boy turns.

BOY
What?

Mono gets closer.

MONO
A name. You should have one.

Mono's hand rests on the stone door, and it reacts - a zap of power, and they open.

BOY
Whoa. How did you do that?!

MONO
(looks at her hands)
I... I do not know...

Exchanging glances, they go through the doors.

EXT. COURTYARD - FORBIDDEN CASTLE - NIGHT

They find themselves in an overgrown courtyard, bathed in moonlight.

They see a bench, and the boy slumps into it, tired. Mono sits down as well.

The boy rests his head on her shoulder, one of his horns curled dangerously in front of her, aimed at her heart.

Mono is unsettled by this, but then... he snores. He's asleep. Mono's eyes close as well.

She rests her cheek on the crown of his head.

INT. COURTYARD - FORBIDDEN CASTLE - DAY

Morning light streams on Mono's face as she awakens. She realizes the boy is no longer next to her - where is he? She peers into the bright light:

The boy is in a standoff with the Trico beast.

MONO

Ico!

He does not respond to that.

So Mono huffs and tries again.

MONO (CONT'D)

Boy!!

The boy looks over his shoulder at her.

BOY

Stay back!

Mono makes a dash for him.

The boy rushes at Trico, stabbing it with the ancient sword. Just as Trico claws at him in retaliation, Mono reaches the boy and yanks him back. The sword is still in the beast.

Mono pulls him toward the door on the other side of the courtyard. She opens it just like the last one.

They make their way through the outer castle ramparts.

Part of the path has crumbled in, right in front of a windmill.

The boy does not even hesitate: he grabs one of the windmill blades, letting it take him all the way around to--

-- the other side, where he drops down.

He stands on the edge, beckons toward Mono, and stretches his hand out to her.

A very angry Trico is coming after them. This spurs Mono to chance it.

She leaps - it looks like she won't make it.

But then she catches his hand.

It pulls him almost all the way off the edge with her.

She's dangling over the misty, jagged rocks of the island's perimeter, waves crashing against them. Certain death.

The veins in the boy's arms turn black, and his muscles seem to be strengthened by it.

He pulls her up, almost with too much force, and she ends up in his arms.

The boy grins, but then sees Trico coming, turns her about just as --

Trico swats him off the edge of the ramparts.

MONO

NOOO!!

Mono watches helplessly as the boy falls to the rocks below.

A shadow forms behind her. She turns to see The Queen standing over her.

THE QUEEN

What is the matter, child? Why dost thou grieve for the horned boy?

MONO

Only one such as you would ask.

THE QUEEN

I am merely puzzled why thy mind has changed... 'tis but a little more than a decade past that you wished him dead.

MONO

A decade? What are you talking about?

THE QUEEN

Thou hast slept in Our catacombs for many years, by your mortal reckoning... for Us, it is no time at all... and in that stasis, it would seem to you as nothing more than a long night's slumber...

Mono bristles.

MONO

How dare you!

The Queen is unfazed.

THE QUEEN

It is Our home. We darest.

Mono's anger gives way to realization.

MONO

Then, the baby...

THE QUEEN

*Yes... the little horned baby grew
into the boy. Thy plan in coming
here was to kill him, was it not?
He is dead, and thy hands are
clean. Why dost thou not rejoice?*

Mono breaks down into tears.

MONO

...I hate you! Leave me be!

THE QUEEN

*If thou wouldst only consider Our
offer, you may have whatsoever you
wish... perhaps you wish the boy to
live once more?*

Mono angrily stands up to face her.

MONO

*Better that he die than to be used
as your pawn.*

THE QUEEN

*Interesting... he did not feel the
same when he brought you to the
Forbidden Lands to be
resurrected...*

MONO

What?

THE QUEEN

*Thy beloved came to Us, and placed
you on Our altar, beseeching Us to
give you back to him.*

The Queen summons up the shadows. Rather than humanoids, they transform into their colossi forms.

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)

*He killed the animal, earthen
creatures made with the fragments
of Our soul, and released Us...*

The shadows all come together and form a Wander-shaped shadow, then Wander becomes the horned Dormin creature.

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)

*He took Our masculine side into
himself... Lord Emon and his
priests dealt him a mortal blow.*

Dormin shrinks back into Wander, and then a little horned baby shadow floating between The Queen's hands.

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)
*Our essence spared him, but
 reverted him to infant form...*

MONO
 The boy was Wander?

The Queen dismisses the shadows.

THE QUEEN
*That is correct. Thus, We ask once
 more: what is it thy heart truly
 desires?*

Mono looks out over the cliffs, conflicted.

EXT. TUNNEL - FORBIDDEN ISLAND

The boy wakes up with a start.

He checks himself all over for injuries from the fall, finds one - he lost one of his horns.

He's in the cavernous tunnel where Mono first rowed in from the ocean. The boat is still there.

He sees Trico, staring at him resentfully. The sword is still lodged in its breast, bleeding onto its feathers.

The boy stands, Trico roars at him.

BOY
 I do not blame you for being angry:
 I did stab you with a sword. But
 you are bigger than me and attacked
 me first. And look, see? My horn
 broke off. That make us even.
 Right?

Trico snorts.

The boy looks around, sees a bunch of barrels stacked up with some butterflies flitting around it.

The boy runs over to one, opens it up hopefully...

But it only has some blue goop inside.

He touches it and finds it viscous; smells it (it's strange); tastes it with the tip of his tongue, spits. How disappointing. But --

-- Trico's ears are perked up, watching him.

BOY (CONT'D)

Hey Trico, do you want this? Is it your food?

Trico looks excited, so the boy turns the barrel over, and rolls it toward Trico.

Trico catches it with a bird-like front claw. The goop oozes out, and Trico laps it up happily.

The boy approaches Trico cautiously, making his way toward the sword.

He lays hands on the sword, and pulls it out, stumbling backward - which is fortuitous, as Trico is not able to bite or claw him for it.

Trico throws an absolute, shrieking fit.

BOY (CONT'D)

Stop that. You would not want that sword to stay in there, would you?

Trico whimpers, and licks the wound.

BOY (CONT'D)

I did not think so. You are welcome.

The boy takes the ancient sword to the water's edge.

He washes off the blood. Something about his reflection, with the tendrils of dark blood curling about in the water, seems to disturb him.

The boy rises, and turns toward Trico - who recoils at the sight of the sword.

BOY (CONT'D)

Do not worry. I will not hurt you.

The boy hides it under his poncho.

Trico looks ambivalent, but lets the boy approach.

The boy sighs, sitting next to Trico.

BOY (CONT'D)
I do not know what to do, Trico.

He looks from the boat to the entryway to the catacombs.

BOY (CONT'D)
I do not think The Queen will make
her a stone-man - she is a girl,
and does not have horns. But I
think she will still be hurt
somehow. I cannot just leave her.

Trico puts its head down and stares at the boy with inky,
glistening black eyes, listening.

TRICO'S POV

The boy is talking, but it's gibberish, and the colors are a
desaturated combo of blue and green. Trico can only really
tell that the boy is distressed and addressing it to Trico.

BACK TO NORMAL AUDIO/VISUAL:

BOY (CONT'D)
How would I get to her in time? The
castle is very large, and full of
doors I cannot open without her.

The boy is gently nudged by Trico's snout. The boy turns and
pets him, which the creature accepts.

BOY (CONT'D)
Say... I do not know if you can
understand me, but... would you do
me a favor, Trico?

Trico cocks its head to one side.

The boy goes around to Trico's side, and climbs up on his
feathery hide.

Trico rises to his feet, as the boy places himself on the
scruff of the creature's neck.

Trico squeezes through the entryway, into the catacombs...

...through the hall...

...and out into the courtyard.

From there, Trico takes flight.

The boy rides the creature over the ramparts, past windmills,
under bridges and through arches.

The creature walks great bridges like a cat, leaping from tower to tower, up to the highest one.

At the last, Trico stops and licks its paws.

BOY (CONT'D)

This is it.

The boy dismounts. He looks at Trico.

BOY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Trico shakes its head, and waits there as the boy leaves.

The boy crosses the last bridge, to the tower keep.

He looks troubled - why does this seem so familiar?

Going across a great bridge, toward the dark entrance of a foreboding ancient tower?

He shakes his head. Must be nothing.

INT. TOWER KEEP - FORBIDDEN CASTLE

The boy enters the keep, and sees:

Mono, surrounded by dark shadows on a raised pedestal.

Mono sees him, and is breathless. Images flash through her mind: memories of Wander, of being with him.

MONO

...Wander.

The boy does not hear her say the name, he's too far away. He puffs out his chest bravely and calls out:

BOY

I am here, strange magical hornless girl! And I have brought your sword! Worry not, I will save you!

The shadows, some bestial and some winged like bats, rush back at him in a flurry of claws and wings.

The boy raises the ancient sword, and charges at the shadows with a battle cry.

The boy swings at them, at first desperate and wild like the young boy and amateur swordsman he is - but then something changes in his demeanor. Something a little more mature...

...his feet shift into more expert stances, more grounded and purposeful...

...his arm muscles tense, the veins blackening as before...

...his eyes are steely, more aware, taking note of all his numerous enemies surrounding him... and the irises glow faintly blue.

Mono watches, with a mix of emotions.

MONO'S POV

She sees him as Wander, fighting off the enemies - which fades to the boy's form, but it's seamless and synched, as he is moving and acting exactly like Wander.

The boy, reincarnated Wander, disperses his shadowy enemies, and turns toward Mono. He runs to her.

Mono finds the boy throwing his arms around her tightly. Her eyes well up with tears. She slowly embraces him back.

MONO

Wander. You are alive...

The boy pulls back, looking at her blankly.

BOY

Wander...?

MONO

It is me. Mono. Is there any chance that somehow, deep down... even just a little bit... you remember me?

BOY

Uh... well sure, of course I remember you. From just a little while ago. So your name is Mono?

Mono painfully nods, accepting that he has no memory of her.

MONO

...Yes. That is my name. And yours is Wander.

The boy processes that. He cannot, and gives up.

BOY

...Okay.

He takes her hand and tugs her away.

BOY (CONT'D)

Those shadows are gone now, but
they will be back before long. Let
us go!

They hear clapping, and turn:

The Queen has formed on the throne at the back of the keep.

THE QUEEN

*Praise to thee, boy... thy skills
in battle are impressive... I
commend thee for making it thus
far, alive and well...*

The boy steps toward her, but Mono pulls his back.

MONO

Wait-

BOY

What are you going to do with
Mono?!

THE QUEEN

*No matter now... thou art too late.
This 'body', if one may call it
such, will soon perish... Mono will
be revived as Our successor. That
is her fate... she will be the
receptacle for Our soul. When she
awakes, her memories of thee will
have vanished, just as thine own of
her. Now cast the sword aside and
leave this place...*

The boy pulls away from Mono and raises the sword.

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)

*Tsk, tsk, not a good little boy at
all... dost thou really want to die
so badly?*

The Queen rises from her throne, eyes glowing fiery orange.

The boy yells and runs at her.

The queen sends blasts of dark energy his way --

-- which he evades and deflects with the sword, running up
the steps to the throne dais.

The Queen forms a blade out of dark tendrils, a smoky blade of darkness.

She parries his aggressive blows calmly, effortlessly, finally grabs him by the remaining horn and flings him --

-- into a stone wall. The horn hits the stone and breaks off.

The Queen laughs.

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)

...A horned boy no longer!

The boy growls - first in a normal young boy's voice, then in a booming, reverberating roar like Dormin's, as he gets up and stalks toward her.

The Queen looks exhilarated, as the fight is renewed.

The boy and the queen spin about, the duel becoming a deadly dance, as an agonized Mono looks on.

They lock blades, the taller queen pushing down upon him.

He pushes back, letting go of the hilt with one hand --

-- and grabbing her by the throat. He throws her backward into the throne.

The Queen does not attempt to rise - in fact she smiles as he comes forward --

-- and stabs her in the chest.

Glowing lines curl outward from the wound, creating the same sigil as the colossi.

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)

*Thou cannot be rid of Us, ever...
not even if... thou takest Our
lives...*

The Queen's eyes turn blue, filling with tears. She smiles.

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)

...We thank you.

Dark tendrils rise out from her wound, and enter --

-- the boy.

Mono cries out, running and catching him as he falls unconscious.

The Queen sighs, her form dispersing into nothing.

Mono strokes the boy's hair.

MONO

Wander, come back. You cannot
die... please do not leave me...
not after all we have sacrificed...

Mono kisses him... and her skin turns pale, her dark hair billowing. Her eyes snap open: they are glowing blue.

Cracks form in the ceiling.

Fissures open up in the floor underneath Mono's bare feet.

Mono picks up the boy's limp body and carries him out, as chips from the ceiling fall, and the castle trembles. Her dress turns from white to black.

The keep crumbles in behind her as she enters the light.

OUTSIDE

The tower turns to rubble as Mono slowly makes her way across the bridge.

Each part of the bridge falls away behind her with every step, as she approaches Trico, waiting patiently on the second-tallest tower.

Mono touches the sword-wound on Trico's breast, and it heals underneath her hand.

Trico lowers its head, allowing her to climb up more easily onto his scruff.

The boy Wander's head leans on Mono's shoulder. She leans on his head, and closes her eyes.

Trico takes off, as its tower perch crumbles.

EXT. SHORE - FORBIDDEN LANDS

The boy wakes up to Agro the horse licking his face. He's lying on the sandy shore.

Mono stands over him. Her hair, eyes, skin and dress are back to normal.

The boy stands up. He looks at her.

BOY
 Hello. What is your name?
 (sees something past her)
 And what is that?

Behind her, sitting tamely, is Trico.

MONO
 I... do not know. I cannot seem to
 remember anything: how we came
 here, who we are...

BOY
 Neither can I.

The boy takes her hand.

BOY (CONT'D)
 Let us go wander around. We shall
 think of something.

Mono smiles.

MONO
 All right.

They wander into the shadow of--

-- a fruit tree, with a white-tailed lizard climbing its
 trunk.

Mono picks a piece of fruit --

--accidentally causing the branch to break down with it.

The boy grabs the lizard.

It leaves behind its tail behind to escape.

The boy picks it up, but then a hawk swoops down and snatches
 it right from his hand.

BOY
 Hey!!

The boy reaches down and picks up the branch-stick. He grabs
 her hand and runs in the direction of the hawk.

BOY (CONT'D)
 Let us go, after it!

As she's jerked along while taking a bite of the fruit, Mono
 makes a noise that sounds very much like...

BOY (CONT'D)

Yorda!

MONO

Huh?

BOY

That should be your name. Yorda.

MONO

Uh... okay.

The two of them race across the grassy fields of the Forbidden Lands, after the hawk.

Agro gallops up to them, the boy mounts, and pulls the newly-renamed Yorda up with him.

Trico bounds after them, fast outpacing Agro.

Trico opens its mouth, and the hawk disappears into its gaping maw, which snaps shut.

OVER BLACK:

The sound of Dormin's laughter, male and female voices mingled together once more.

THE END