

SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

Screenplay by

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Based on the creations of
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FADE IN

EXT. BORDERLANDS -- NIGHT

We're in a primeval landscape. Forested hills dominated by fog. One essential truth: this world is not our own.

A WHITE-TAILED LIZARD

Scurries nervously across damp soil, eking out its survival against the odds. Edging closer to a puddle's reflection of a BLUE MOON until-

A HAWK SWOOPS IN AND PLUCKS IT UP

Shattering this tranquility and lifting us into the night sky. So much for the lizard. Let's stay with the hawk.

We're FLYING urgently over this hauntingly beautiful land. Sparse and remote -- devoid of civilization.

The hawk then DIVES into a canyon towards-

A YOUNG MAN (20) RIDING FURIOUSLY ON HORSEBACK.

Like nothing else matters, because right now it doesn't. Probably has something to do with-

THE BEAUTIFUL DEAD GIRL draped across his lap. We have no idea who she is or why she's dead. But this young man is clinging to hope with everything he has left.

EXT. BORDERLANDS FOREST -- NIGHT

As they clear the tree-line...

THERE'S AN ANCIENT STONE TEMPLE

Hidden amongst the vines. Man-made, but how long ago we have no idea. A while. Maybe longer than that. Its colonnade stretches from one end of the clearing to the other. Ornamental carvings in a sacred RUNIC LANGUAGE.

The young man slows his horse. Eyes darting frantically. Looking for a way in. And seeing-

A NARROW SHAFT OF LIGHT pouring through the center.

He kicks the stirrups. The horse moves in.

EXT. SACRED GATEWAY -- NIGHT

LIGHT ENVELOPING THEM as they enter the passage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Transformative. Like a journey to another plane, finally spitting them out into-

EXT. FORBIDDEN LAND ENTRANCE -- TWILIGHT

SUNLIGHT.

A miraculous transition from night to day. Or what's left of day in this eerie sepia haze of-

AN EMPTY, FORGOTTEN LAND

Stretching as far as we can see. What once must have been some glorious civilization is now just the mossy ruins it left behind. Uninhabited for centuries. A tattered STONE BRIDGE rises above the valley floor, supported by grand archways, leading half a mile towards-

THE SHRINE OF WORSHIP. A colossal man-made tower, reaching for the heavens -- but by the look of it, empty as a tomb.

EXT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP - ENTRANCE -- DAY

PANNING DOWN as the young man and his horse hastily approach the Shrine.

There's a DOORWAY built for the size of a common man. It's blocked by a heavy stone. But as we get closer we hear a SHIFTING and the stone-

LIFTS, inviting them into the black mouth of darkness.

INT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP -- TWILIGHT

Riding swiftly down a circular ramp, passing a ritual cleansing pool and heading into-

THE MAIN HALL. A long cathedral-like space. Monumental would be an understatement. A vaulted ceiling runs hundreds of feet high. And flanking the sacred nave...

ARE MANY STONE IDOLS. The busts of mythological beasts.

The young man doesn't care to notice. He's got other things on his mind. He dismounts and carries the girl's veiled body down the aisle as if making an offering-

TO THE ALTAR. A stone platform with a view of the valley.

He lays her on the tablet and removes the cloth. She's wearing a white gown. Her hands are folded peacefully across her chest. Her eyes closed in permanent slumber.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And only now does the young man finally catch his breath, giving us our first real look at...

WANDER (20). Young, impulsive, and desperately in love.

He hears MOVEMENT behind him. Ethereal whispers. Fingers scratching along aged stone. Telltale signs that-

They are not alone.

The horse stirs.

PUDDLES OF BLACK SMOKE

Rise from the floor, giving shape to-

GROTESQUE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS

Staggering towards them. These are SHADOW CREATURES. Emaciated, feature-less human forms encased in obsidian.

By now most of us would be running. But summoning his courage, Wander reaches to his sheath and draws-

AN ANCIENT SWORD

Its rusted blade etched in the shape of a long spade, which he raises at them as if levying a threat.

And the sword begins to GLOW with a blue-green light.

The creatures, seeing this...

ABRUPTLY RETREAT and DISSIPATE into the air!

We STAY WITH THE SMOKE, swirling up towards the rotunda... now through the rotunda into-

EXT. OPEN SKY -- TWILIGHT

CLOUDS. Sparking with rain and electricity. As if an AWESOME POWER were waking up.

INT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP -- CONTINUOUS

A reverberating GROAN pouring through the main hall. It belongs to an unseen, disembodied spirit that speaks with MANY VOICES at once. This is DORMIN.

DORMIN (O.S.)
That sword does not belong to you.

Wander spins cautiously.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER

Who's there?

Apprehensive silence.

WANDER (CONT'D)

I was told there's a spirit here
that can revive the souls of the
dead.

DORMIN (O.S.)

(after a long beat)

We are known as Dormin.

Wander turns and gestures to the girl:

WANDER

Then I need you to bring her back.

Silence turns to LAUGHTER. Deep and bellowing.

DORMIN (O.S.)

Souls once lost cannot be reclaimed.
Isn't that the law of mortals?

Wander turns back to the girl's angelic face.

WANDER

There has to be a way.

Memories passing by as we-

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BORDERLANDS VILLAGE -- DAY --- **FLASHBACK**

ONE MOON EARLIER.

And what a difference a moon makes. We're no longer in
that haunted land, but now a more earth-bound setting.

A primitive village carved into a mountain plateau.
Indigenous people living under harsh conditions. Bartering
livestock, herbs and spices. A man slices open a TURTLE'S
UNDERSIDE and feeds its oozing contents to a hungry child.

Religion everywhere. SHAMANS praying to stacked cairns.
Ritual tattoos, scarification, jeweled teeth. A potent
mix of tribal Hindu, Aztec, Shinto Japanese.

EXT. FARMER'S Paddock -- DAY

Nearby is a neglected farm. Dilapidated thatched roof,
dried maize crops, pigs sauntering about.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NOTE: the people here speak in an exotic, completely-unheard-of tongue (subtitles in *italics*).

FARMER (subtitled) (O.C.)
Where's the demon today?

The FARMER (50s) emerges. Oafish, sloppy, a bushy grey beard stained with liquor. He carries a BUCKET OF FEED.

FARMER (CONT'D)
*Demon's got to eat. Yes, yes.
All he does-- eat, eat, eat.*

He hauls the feed around the barn to the pasture, where-

A STALLION stands in a muddy field. Mix of Friesian and thoroughbred. It's Wander's horse from the last scene. He's tightly fastened to three posts, like a prisoner. Unable to move in any direction.

We'll call him AGRO.

FARMER (CONT'D)
How are we, demon? Hungry today?

Agro bucks. The farmer holds out his free hand.

FARMER (CONT'D)
*How about a morsel of old man's
flesh? In the mood for that? No?
Good behavior today?*

He sets the bucket down, momentarily dropping guard on his hand, and that's when-

Agro fiercely CHOMPS at it!

The farmer reacts by grabbing the horse roughly by the mane. Spit spews from his lips...

FARMER (CONT'D)
*There it is-- there's the demon.
You have to be faster than that.*

Kicks over the bucket just inches from the horse's reach.

FARMER (CONT'D)
Eat, eat, eat.

Then he stumbles back to the barn and slams the door.

STAY WITH AGRO, trying to reach the food despite his abrasive bindings. A pathetic exercise in futility.

WE PAN OVER TO-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The bushes on the edge of the pasture. Which seem to be rustling. Is it a squirrel? A pig? Or maybe-

WANDER

Crawling out of the brush. The one-moon-earlier version of Wander. Tattered clothes and dirt-caked fingertips. Hasn't had a meal in days. Around his wrists are the remnants of ROPE BINDINGS -- recently liberated.

He sets his sights on the farm. Not much to look at, but the chimney is a sign of life. Which means signs of food -- and for Wander, nothing is more paramount right now.

He spies a TROUGH in the pig pen. Licks his chops.

He scales the fence, pushing aside surprised swine as he crawls through the mud... towards the trough... anticipation rising... what could it be but-

PIG FEED. Oh, sweet success.

He digs in. Doesn't care what it tastes like, so long as it goes down. A moment of bliss.

And when he's done, he sees-

THE HORSE standing in the pasture. Watching him with a degree of incredulity.

A magnificent mare. It would make a magnificent ride.

Wander sees a SADDLE posted nearby and gets an idea. Being careful not to stir the farmer inside, he swipes the saddle and approaches the pasture.

The horse neighs a warning. He doesn't like guests.

WANDER

Hey, it's okay.

Wander is surprised to see SCRAPES AND SCARS along the horse's powerful body. Years of hard abuse.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Are you hurt?

He reaches for his snout. Agro kicks the mud. Watch it.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Okay, no need to get ugly. I just want to have a look. See?

He works his hands down to the bridle and LOOSENS AGRO'S BINDINGS. Now the horse can devour his food.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER (CONT'D)

There. Wonder how long they kept
you like this.

The horse is too busy eating. Wander places the saddle
gently over Agro's back, fastening the stirrups...

...and swiftly CLIMBS ON TOP!

This is too much for Agro, who BUCKS WILDLY and throws
the young man back into the mud.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Oh, I see how it is. Well maybe I
deserved that, but trust me-- you'll
thank me for this!

He yanks on the bridle and LEAPS BACK ON TOP!

Now the horse fights twice as hard. Wander clings tightly
to the reins, holding on with determination. Neither
horse nor the young man want to give in. It's a contest
of stubborn spirits.

So Agro tries another tactic. Instead of jumping, he-

SPRINTS AROUND THE PASTURE AT FULL SPEED!

Neighing loudly, vaulting through the sludge, cutting
sharp corners near the fence and knocking off stanchions
with powerful force.

The FARMER emerges.

FARMER

What in gods...?!

He grabs a pickax -- comically struggling to wield it
over his head.

And the horse lays eyes on him. His acrimony grows. Now
he's all but forgotten about the boy on his back -- he's
hell-bent on the cruel drunk farmer.

WANDER

Get out of the way old man!

Even a drunk could see the danger coming at him. The
farmer drops the ax and runs for his life. The horse is
closing in. Dead-set. And just before the poor old man
is about to be trampled-

AGRO LEAPS OVER HIM

Soaring majestically past the fence and sprinting into
the open terrain!

EXT. OPEN LANDSCAPE -- DAY

Wander and Agro ride rapidly through the countryside.

It's the horse who's in charge right now. Cutting past cliffs and stone barriers at breakneck speed, hooves trampling the tall grass... unfearing and incredible.

Wander doesn't try to take over. He knows what it's like to crave the exhilaration of escape, so he lets the horse have his moment. And only because he doesn't force it does the horse begin to respect this young rider.

Allowing him to take the reins. When he does, Agro acknowledges him by speeding up.

He cedes control -- not to a master, but to an equal.

EXT. SHALLOW STREAM -- DAY

They stop near fresh water. Agro trudges through the shallows and sips from the stream.

Wander leans forward. Reaches out to run his fingers through Agro's mane...

WANDER

Good horse-

...but as soon as he touches it, the horse instinctively LAUNCHES HIM INTO THE WATER!

Wander flails about in the current.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Perfect! Just perfect. How about a little gratitude, huh? Stupid horse.

Agro stomps a defiant hoof in the water. Wander splashes back at him. And he's about to say more when he hears...

A FEMALE VOICE

Humming just around the river's bend.

Curious, Wander leads Agro behind a rock. He pokes his head over it to see...

A GIRL

Washing her face in the river. About five foot five, not an inch to spare. Slender frame, brown eyes... and familiar because she's the girl we saw in the beginning.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Her name is MONO (18).

Right now she's rinsing a BRUISE on her upper cheek. The kind you could only get in one way. She thinks she's alone, but the RIPPLES in the water indicate otherwise. Startled, she looks up.

Wander doesn't have time to duck.

Their eyes lock for the first time -- and neither knows what to say.

They won't have to.

A RISING NOISE from behind Wander.

Thwup.

Thwup.

Thwup-

A FLYING WEAPON suddenly hurls into frame and clocks him in the head! He's unconscious before he even drops.

EXT. FRONTIER VILLAGE -- DAY

Wander is dragged through the village behind three horses. Ahead of him, MASKED WARRIORS, seen only from behind.

INT. LORD EMON'S SANCTUARY -- DAY

There's a bonfire in the middle of an octagonal shrine.

The warriors toss Wander to the floor. Several more large men emerge from the shadows. The farmer is among them.

Wander rises, weighs his odds.

WANDER

I don't suppose any of you might
be interested in a fair fight.

No response. Wander heaves a sigh.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Okay, let's get it over with.

The warriors move in.

Wander defends himself like a horse who's been cornered -- darting, flailing wildly. He's got real fight in him. But the warriors eventually OVERWHELM HIM.

INT. LORD EMON'S SANCTUARY - HALLWAY -- DAY

TRACKING with a massive man down a dark, torch-lit passage. The CHIEF WARRIOR (40s). Pushing past hanging shells towards a private area, where...

A SHAMAN

Sits with his back to us. Above him, an OWL'S MASK dangles from the wall. Painted white with blood-red tears.

This is LORD EMON (50s).

Think of him as the spiritual leader to these people. A role that's been handed down from generation to generation. Everyone in this position must decide whether it's better to be loved or feared -- and Emon prefers the latter.

He doesn't look up when the chief warrior enters. Too busy dusting off a small figurine of an IDOL.

LORD EMON (subtitled)
What's got them so excited?

CHIEF WARRIOR
Caught a thief with the farmer's horse.

LORD EMON
Does he belong to us?

CHIEF WARRIOR
No, he's an outsider.

Emon grabs a half-eaten apple and rises.

LORD EMON
Unfortunate.

INT. LORD EMON'S SANCTUARY -- DAY

The beating continues. Wander takes his licks with dignity. Like a young man who's been hit all his life -- he knows when to fight, and when to tuck his head in.

Emon enters and gestures for the warriors to back off.

He kneels before the young thief. Holds out a hand, as if offering it for a dog to sniff. Then he grabs Wander's arm, exposing TATTOOED MARKINGS, which he read:

LORD EMON
Antroza caia. How do they say that in the city? "Property of"?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER

I don't know. You tell me.

LORD EMON

I gather there's probably a master
somewhere looking for his slave.

WANDER

Thought it was time to explore
other opportunities.

Emon cracks a grin.

LORD EMON

And what opportunities were you
exploring out here?

WANDER

(searching)
Out here...

LORD EMON

You're at least three days from
the nearest city.

WANDER

Honestly, I was just hoping for a
meal.

LORD EMON

A meal?

Emon glances towards his men.

LORD EMON (subtitled) (CONT'D)

He says he was hoping for a meal.

The men begin to laugh. It's contagious. Wander glances
around, increasingly uneasy, until suddenly-

EMON GRABS HIM BY THE WRIST.

He draws his hand toward the FIRE. Wander grows concerned.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

That's all you were looking for?

WANDER

Listen is this about the horse? I
apologize, it was a misunderstanding-

Emon forcefully pushes his hand into the FLAMES!

LORD EMON

Why don't you be honest and tell
us what you were really here for?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Through great pain, Wander stares upwards towards-

THE ANCIENT SWORD dangling over the fire like a sacred relic. Light dances off its battered blade, swirling around the room with wispy TENDRILS.

WANDER

I have no idea what you're talking about!

Emon stares into his eyes, probing for truth...

And finally DISCARDS the young man. He rubs dirt in his hands, as if to rid himself of the stench.

LORD EMON

I suppose you don't.

WANDER

So that's it... I can go, right?

Emon stares down at this pitiable thief.

LORD EMON

Part of me is sorry for you. Born to nothing, given nothing-- all of your miserable life. You thought you could come out here and... what, make something of yourself.

(a beat)

That is not your fate. You will never amount to anything, because you, my young slave friend, were nothing from the day you were born.

Wander glares at him. A glimmer of HURT.

Emon storms past his men as he says:

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

Hor-Un.

And the warriors pounce on Wander.

EXT. FRONTIER VILLAGE -- NIGHT

QUICK FLASHES: Wander's face, disoriented, as he is subjected to a variety of strange rituals.

WHITE POWDER thrown into his eyes.

His head dunked in water over and over again.

Elders murmuring. Bowing to the ground, hands pressed to their foreheads, praying to SACRED IDOLS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The same ones we saw in the Shrine of Worship.

A TUNIC with an ornamental SIGIL is draped over his head. Colored feathers wrapped around his waist.

And then he is dragged through the mud... carried like a sacrificial lamb through the village as women cry out in guttural chants and children throw stones.

EXT. CROSSROADS -- DAY

A THICK BAMBOO CAGE dangles from a post. The warriors throw Wander in and secure the door with weighted cords.

WANDER

What do you expect me to do here?

No response. They retreat back to town.

Frustrated, Wander sits back -- CRUNCHES against something.

HUMAN REMAINS. What's left of previous prisoners.

Planted among them is a sign -- a warning to travelers -- the same phrase in many languages (including ours):

TURN BACK

EXT. CROSSROADS -- NIGHT

Night has fallen. Wander is fiddling with the lock. Trying to get his hands into its folds when he hears-

FOOTSTEPS in the dark.

He tenses. Looks around.

WANDER

Who's out there?

MONO appears. Timidly, as if nearing a wild animal. She slips a SATCHEL between the bars. A loaf of bread.

MONO

Chup, they hear you. Eat.

He glances down at the food. Only now does it flood back to him how hungry he is. He devours the bread.

Mono circles the cage, investigating the cords.

MONO (CONT'D)

I am Mono. You are?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER
They call me Wander.

MONO
Mistake to come here. Not friendly
to outsiders.

WANDER
You don't say.

MONO
They will leave you here to die.

Wander finishes eating, returns to fiddling with the lock.

WANDER
What does it mean, "*Hor-Un*"?

MONO
It means you are trespasser.
Seeking Forbidden Land.

WANDER
Well, I've never heard of any
forbidden land.

MONO
It is haunted. Bad place.

WANDER
Haunted, huh. By what.

MONO
Shaman have banished a spirit that
can revive souls of the dead.

Wander looks at her like she has to be kidding.

WANDER
A spirit. Well that's just great...

He tries to free himself with renewed desperation.

Mono, meanwhile, fixes her hands on two dangling cords,
levering her foot against the cage. Starting to move
gears around. And suddenly-

CRACK! The bottom of the cage drops open and Wander
tumbles to the ground! He regards her curiously.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Why did you do that?

MONO
No more questions. Come now.

EXT. FARMER'S Paddock -- NIGHT

He follows her to the farmhouse. They pass a window and get a glimpse of THE FARMER sleeping inside. He snores face-down. A bottle of ale tipped near his fingers.

WANDER

Where are we going?

MONO

Chup-- do not wake my father.

WANDER

That drunk is your father?

She bristles, ignores the question. Leads him around the corner to the pasture...

...where AGRO sleeps by a tree.

MONO

You rode this horse, yes?

WANDER

That's why you brought me here?

MONO

My father calls him Agro. Means, "Demon spirit." No one has ever ridden him before.

WANDER

So what.

MONO

So you will show me.

Wander looks at her reluctantly.

MONO (CONT'D)

Or I scream, and they come.

WANDER

What kind of choice is that?

She points insistently at the horse. He sighs, gives in, leads her to the pasture.

When Agro senses their proximity, he tenses.

WANDER (CONT'D)

There's nothing wrong with this horse. See? He's harmless-

Wander puts a hand on his mane, but Agro jerks away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER (CONT'D)

Right-- unless you touch his mane.
He's got a thing about that.

Wander patiently holds out his hand for the horse to sniff.
Agro relaxes. A moment of tenderness.

MONO

How do you know he is harmless?

WANDER

You can just tell by looking.
He's been tied up like this all
his life, hasn't he.

He gently pets Agro's snout.

WANDER (CONT'D)

It's wrong. You can't keep someone
like that. He wants to be free.

Mono studies Wander as he caresses the horse. Wondering
if he's talking more about Agro or himself.

Then the young man calms him to the point where he quickly --
fearlessly -- pulls himself into the saddle.

WANDER (CONT'D)

All you have to do is show him
you're not like everyone else.

When all is steady, he extends a hand to Mono.

MONO

With you? No.

WANDER

I thought you wanted to see.

She casts him an untrusting glance. But her curiosity
wins out. She climbs onto Agro's back. Feeling the
horse's heaving lungs. From trepidation to acceptance.

Wander tries pulling her closer, but she reacts to his
touch, keeping her distance.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Suit yourself.

He spurs the horse and they speed out of the pasture.

EXT. OPEN LANDSCAPE -- NIGHT

A liberating ride under the moon. The wind in their hair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

At first Mono is afraid, but soon fear gives way to wonder. She closes her eyes, invigorated. Feeling the rhythm of Agro's legs. The pulse of a wild, untamed beauty.

EXT. CROSSROADS -- DAWN

They stop at the crossroads leading back to town. The dangling cage stands nearby. Both of them dismount.

Wander soothes Agro's face while adjusting the stirrups.

MONO

You do not lie? You came here
only because you were hungry?

WANDER

Yes.

MONO

You have never heard of the
Forbidden Land before today?

He turns to her and holds up his wrists -- showing the cuts from his bindings.

WANDER

I ran from the city four days ago.
Before that I was raised in a stone
mine. Beaten every day of my life.
So if you're asking me what I'm
looking for out here-- it's not
this. I just want to be left alone.

And Mono believes him. She turns away, swearing to herself-

MONO

Itsuwara.

WANDER

What does that mean?

MONO

Means they speak untruth.

She puts the horse's reins into Wander's hands.

MONO (CONT'D)

You will take Agro and leave this
place.

WANDER

Why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONO

You have done nothing. They were
wrong to hurt you. Go.

Baffled, he starts to lead Agro away.

Until he STOPS. Tugs at the reins.

WANDER

You ever thought about leaving
yourself?

She turns to him curiously.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Sorry, it's just... I've seen beauty
marks like that before. And I
know you didn't get them working
in the field.

She puts a hand to her bruised cheek, self-conscious.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Doesn't have to be that way. You
could leave these people behind.
Go wherever you want.

MONO

Where?

WANDER

Wouldn't matter. Anywhere.

Mono mulls it over in her head.

MONO

Cannot.

Wander drops Agro's reins and approaches her.

WANDER

How come I get the sense you're
not telling me something.

MONO

You must leave now.

WANDER

Not until you-

But when he puts a hand on her shoulder she violently-

MONO

Stay away!

PUSHES HIM OFF. He just stands there, hand hovering.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER

I'm sorry.

She turns away. A TEAR streams down. She wipes it.

MONO

I am no good to you. I am *mijime*.
Born to dead mother. Means all
that I touch is cursed.

This doesn't strike him as right.

WANDER

So your mother died when you were
born, and your people blame it on
you?

MONO

It is sign of cursed fate. You
would not want me close.

WANDER

Says who? Those elders?

Wander takes her by the shoulders. Unafraid.

WANDER (CONT'D)

They're wrong. Who do those people
think they are. Who is anyone to
tell you who you are. They don't
know anything-

MONO

Why won't you leave?

Wander considers this for a long beat. Stares at Agro,
as if the two of them were making up their minds together.
Then he turns to the cage and-

CLIMBS BACK INSIDE!

MONO (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

WANDER

I'm returning the favor.

He pulls the door shut. It locks. She shakes the bars.

MONO

Why did you do that?!

WANDER

Because it's why you helped me
tonight, wasn't it?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER (CONT'D)

You figured if they're wrong about me, maybe they're wrong about you, too.

MONO

They will lock you here until you are dead-

WANDER

I don't care.

Wander suddenly grasps her hands through the bars:

WANDER (CONT'D)

No one's ever done for me what you did tonight. So I am not leaving you here. It wouldn't be right.

She's speechless. And for a brief instant we sense a glimmer of hope. It's never occurred to her just how unhappy she is here. The realization is frightening...

...and she pulls back. Hastily takes Agro by the reins and withdraws into the night as we-

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP -- DAY

THE PRESENT.

Wander, gently caressing Mono's cold cheek.

DORMIN (O.S.)

She was cursed. It is their way.

WANDER

There must be something you can do for her.

DORMIN (O.S.)

Once we could have saved her. But that was long, long ago.

Wander rises, surveying the decimation around him.

WANDER

What happened to this place?

DORMIN (O.S.)

A grave injustice. This kingdom was once beautiful, and free. Vested with the power of magic.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DORMIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Until the shaman came. They hated
our way of life. So they stole
our sword and scorched the land.
Now we are prisoners in this place.

The light from the rotunda stretches towards the ANCIENT
SWORD in Wander's hands.

DORMIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You have taken what belongs to
them. They will come for you soon.

Wander nods knowingly.

WANDER
You have to help me.

DORMIN (O.S.)
It is no longer possible.

WANDER
You're just trapped here?

DORMIN (O.S.)
Cursed forever.

WANDER
And there's no way to break that
curse?

A long, contemplative beat.

DORMIN (O.S.)
With that sword, it may be possible.
(hesitant)
But the price would be too heavy.

WANDER
What do you mean?

DORMIN (O.S.)
You are not a warrior.

WANDER
You don't know that. You haven't
even given me a chance.

The LIGHT stretches towards the gallery of idols.

DORMIN (O.S.)
There is only one way to break
their curse. You must slay their
gods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Wander steps curiously to the enormous stone statues.
Each one depicts a MYSTERIOUS CREATURE.

DORMIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Foul giants that haunt this land.
Vile and monstrous. It is no task
for a boy.

Wander stares into the daunting, monstrous face of one of
the creatures. Losing hope...

And then the sword begins to GLOW again.

The voices appear to be surprised by this...

DORMIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And yet the sword speaks to your
strength. Perhaps there is hope...

Wander looks up eagerly.

WANDER
Let me do this. Let me help you.

The voices build to a rumbling cacophony, as if forming a
grim, final decision.

DORMIN (O.S.)
Very well. You must hurry, for
your time is short. That sword
will aid you on your quest. Bring
it south to the dark fortress at
the end of the land.

WANDER
How will I know where to find them?

DORMIN (O.S.)
They will find you.

The light stretches towards the valley outside.

DORMIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Should you reach the fortress, we
will learn what your destiny holds.

The light VANISHES. Nothing left but the echo of wind.

Wander sheathes the sword. Alone again amidst the gallery
of idols. Making up his mind. This is his moment.

He kneels beside Mono's body, with passionate resolve:

WANDER
No matter where this takes me, I
promise I will see you again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And he kisses her cold lips.

EXT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP -- TWILIGHT

A mix of bright light and opaque storm clouds lend an air of surreal calm to this place.

Young man and horse ride out onto the valley floor.

The horse bucks. Wander pats him reassuringly.

WANDER

It's okay. We're in this together.

Then he fixes his gaze towards the southern mountains.

AN IMPOSING SPIRE

Stands backlit against the faded sky. Waiting for him -- a long journey's distance. This is the DARK FORTRESS.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Let's go, Agro.

He tightens the reins and moves Agro along.

EXT. CENTRAL PLAINS -- TWILIGHT

Moving through the open terrain. The Shrine of Worship begins to recede behind them. Life out here is sparse. Vegetation struggles to survive. Only mountains remain.

Wander and Agro are dwarfed by the scale of it all.

Ahead of them, the mountains funnel into TALL CLIFFS, luring them towards a narrow gap and into...

EXT. VALLEY PLAIN -- TWILIGHT

A vast valley, bordered by cliffs on either side. It is punctuated by giant boulders and faded moss -- probably the result of many landslides.

Wander and Agro make their way across.

As they do...

THE SWORD STARTS GLOWING IN ITS SHEATH.

Wander draws it, stares curiously. There's a PULSE, as if it's anticipating something.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER
You see that, Agro?

He climbs down. Raises the sword. LIGHT seems to funnel from the sky, gathering on the edge of the blade.

WANDER (CONT'D)
What's it doing...?

He walks ahead, still holding the sword aloft.

Agro waits patiently. Until he notices...

A DISTANT RUMBLE.

It's too subtle for Wander to hear, but the horse is spooked. He stomps his feet to get Wander's attention.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Hold on, Agro.

ANOTHER RUMBLE. This one a little louder.

Agro notices SMALL PEBBLES ROLLING DOWN THE NEARBY SLOPE. Like they're being shaken by something.

He neighs again.

Wander spins around, frustrated.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Agro-- what?

But Agro is frozen. Because he sees what Wander doesn't...

THE EARTH MOVING BEHIND HIM.

Soil sliding off a RISING SHAPE, boulders and moss shaking, shifting and writhing as if they were all connected to the same hidden body.

Hearing this, Wander turns just as-

A GIANT, HULKING MASS

Stretches higher and higher into the air. Shedding grubs and stone as it shakes itself off, revealing itself as-

A living, breathing COLOSSUS.

It's almost impossible to convey the size, the sheer honest-to-God terrifying scale of this thing. One hundred feet tall, with stone armor and thick BROWN FUR. It wields a STONE CLUB that looks like it was carved from a mountain. And GREEN EYES -- bearing down like predatory beacons.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Its name is VALUS.

Wander backs off with rising fear. Terrified by the sight of this mighty, otherworldly THING. There's a melancholy to the giant's slowness, its inquisitive silence...

...until it LOCKS IN on the young man.

And begins to raise its club.

Wander stumbles and SPRINTS BACKWARDS!

Trying to run towards Agro. He doesn't have to look back to feel the WIND of the club coming down.

And just before he reaches the horse-

THE WEAPON SMASHES DOWN

Causing the ground to RUPTURE and RISE UP between them -- a wall of disrupted stone now separates him from his horse!

He's on his own.

Valus lets out a LOUD GROAN -- like a roaring landslide. It dislodges the club from the ground. Raises it again.

Wander picks himself up and darts to the right, leaping for the cover of a dead tree as once again the club SLAMS INTO THE EARTH several feet away. Uprooted brush, leaves, and dirt fly towards him, pushing him back-

INTO THE CLIFF WALL. There's nowhere to go.

And as the Colossus raises the club yet again-

Wander does the only thing that pops into his head. Instead of running away, he darts straight towards the creature and-

SPRINTS THROUGH ITS LEGS!

Valus ROARS, furious. Unable to get a bearing on the prey avoiding its heels...

...the prey which is RUNNING FOR ITS LIFE.

This isn't strategy. It's survival.

Ahead of him, Wander sees ANOTHER ROCK FORMATION. If he can dive beside it he may have something to hide behind. If only he could get there before-

THE CLUB SWINGS DOWN!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Right on top of the rock. The young man vanishes in the haze of dust. We have no idea whether he made it in time.

Stillness follows.

Valus lifts the weapon to regard its crushed prey. But when it does...

...there is NOTHING on the ground.

Wander has disappeared!

UNTIL WE CRANE UP...

WAY, WAY UP

Along the raised club, a small speck dangling from its ridge... a speck with two legs and two hands...

WANDER IS CLINGING TO THE SIDE!

His legs flail a hundred feet in the air. His fingers grip the rough stone. The wind screams at his ears. Birds swarm, cawing and plucking at his hands.

Valus, not bright enough to see where he's gone, searches the ground with its foot, ROARING OUT IN ANGER.

Meanwhile, Wander's grip is slipping. He's twenty feet above the creature's head, about to fall...

PLUMMETING

And landing roughly on the Colossus's shoulder. Losing his footing, tumbling down the slope of its ridged back.

His sword clatters next to him, about to fall off the edge when Wander grabs a TUFT OF HAIR and stops himself. Catches the sword in the same motion.

Now he's on for the ride. The putrid smell of this earthy creature -- the dust and mites rising from its brown fur, the moss growing from its stone shoulders -- all of it beheld in full living color as Wander desperately crawls up its hairy mane in search of a stable surface.

Valus senses the movement. Knows what the game is now. Shakes violently to try to throw the intruder.

Wander holds on while his legs flail. He's a few shakes from being tossed off the largest bronco you'll ever see.

As a defense mechanism, he swings the sword at the creature. The blade clatters uselessly off the stone armor. It's like stabbing a wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Valus begins swaying again. Insects and small creatures are shaken loose. Wander is somersaulted backwards, grasping around for a grip, and when he does-

HE SEES A SOFT PATCH OF FUR

An exposed tuft, free of the armor, in the last place he'd ever want to go...

THE TOP OF VALUS'S HEAD.

Which gives Wander an idea.

He grits his teeth and climbs with renewed purpose. He's got to reach that soft patch of cranial glory.

And finally he makes it, stabilizing himself over the creature's exposed skin. Looking down at its scaly surface just as something curious happens...

THE SWORD GLOWS

Converging the light from above and projecting a BLUE-GREEN SIGIL over its skin -- right over the soft spot. When he sees it, he raises the blade-

AND PLUNGES IT INTO THE CREATURE'S HEAD!

The sword penetrates the tuft of earth grime, going all the way down to the handle and drawing with it-

A GEYSER OF BLACK BLOOD

Which nearly throws Wander backwards.

VALUS GROANS PAINFULLY, the club dropping from its hands.

For a moment there's a writhing about, a frantic desperation. And then the creature's massive body suddenly JOLTS, goes still...

AND TOPPLES SIDEWAYS!

Wander is going down with it. He holds on as they careen towards the ground...

GETTING CLOSER AND CLOSER

Waiting for the impact and finally-

WHAM! Touch down with staggering velocity. Wander is tossed painfully to the earth.

As for the Colossus? Motionless behind him.

DEAD.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Its body begins decaying into a crumbling stone. No longer a body -- now just a heaping mound again.

Wander looks back in shock. He's killed it! He doesn't know how, through what stroke of genius or luck, but he's actually managed to bring this thing down!

And just when we think the coast is clear-

BLACK SMOKE TENDRILS

Suddenly emerge from the corpse and PLUNGE THROUGH HIM!

Like a strange, ethereal attack from a supernatural being.

Wander convulses, drops to his knees.

ENERGY courses through him. A throbbing pain shoots through his head. He clings to his temples, pain surging in every synapse like a sensory overload. And only one vision runs through his mind:

WANDER (CONT'D)

Mono...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FRONTIER VILLAGE -- MORNING --- **FLASHBACK**

ONE MOON EARLIER.

The sun rising. Roosters crowing. Life beginning anew.

EXT. CROSSROADS -- DAY

Wander stirs in his cage. Small children are lobbing stones at his bamboo bars. He scowls defiantly.

Nearby, a group of villagers carry water down the footpath.

Mono and her father are among them.

Wander locks eyes. She's drawn to him. The farmer scowls suspiciously and leads her away.

EXT. FARMER'S Paddock -- EVENING

Mono feeds pigs. An inglorious task. She's done it all her life, but until now she has never considered just what a miserable job it is.

So she finds her mind wandering. Stares towards the distant crossroads.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

At the silhouette of the YOUNG MAN in the cage.

EXT. CROSSROADS -- NIGHT

Wander is awakened when his cage SNAPS OPEN.

Mono stands there, keeping a nervous distance. She's holding Agro by the reins.

EXT. OPEN LANDSCAPE -- NIGHT

They ride once again. This time Mono, caught up in the moment, wraps her arms around Wander's waist.

He looks back, surprised, then pulls her closer.

EXT. CROSSROADS -- NIGHT

End of the ride. They stop in front of the cage again.

Wander looks at Mono hopefully, but her eyes are focused back on the village. Something still holds her back. Like she's afraid to leave for reasons we don't understand.

So he climbs into the cage and shuts it. Still waiting.

As she leads Agro away, Mono glances furtively over her shoulder... and SMILES at him.

EXT. CROSSROADS -- DAY

The chief warrior and his men ride past Wander's cage on their way back from a hunt.

WARRIOR (subtitled)
Hungry, Hor-Un?

A warrior tosses a fragment of meat into the dirt, nowhere near where Wander can get it. They laugh and ride off.

But Wander seems indifferent. He's in a better place.

EXT. OPEN LANDSCAPE -- NIGHT

Another night together.

Wander and Mono sit beside a lake, watching WATER BUFFALO while Agro eats grass nearby.

WANDER
Pelaj-iss?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONO

No, *Pela-ji*. How do you say in city language?

WANDER

We call them "water buffalo".

MONO

Pela-ji is better. More beautiful.

WANDER

(laughs)

Guess you're right.

She gazes at the water. Watches the family of water buffalo splashing happily.

MONO

Maybe in my next life, I will come back as one of them.

WANDER

In your next life?

MONO

My people believe, those who suffer in this life are given a chance to return in the next.

WANDER

You mean reincarnation.

MONO

That is your word, yes.

WANDER

(cracks a grin)

Is that why you don't want to leave with me? You don't want to hurt your chances of coming back as a water buffalo?

Her face darkens.

MONO

Would not understand.

WANDER

Hey, I'm sorry. I was joking.

She withdraws. And Wander begins to realize this is exactly what's been holding her back.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Here's what I don't understand.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER (CONT'D)

Living this life for the next one.
Doesn't make sense.

MONO

It is our way.

WANDER

What, so they say, sorry, this
life isn't for you? Work hard,
suffer, don't complain?

He angrily skips a stone across the water.

MONO

You think it is better to be
selfish.

WANDER

Selfish?

He turns to her, indignant.

WANDER (CONT'D)

All my life I worked underground.
Barely saw the sky, let alone, you
know... water buffalo. And now
that I'm out, okay fine-- I'll be
selfish. There's a whole world
out there, and I never got to see
it. And you know why? Because
everyone always said it wasn't my
time. So I'm making it my time.

She's moved by this.

MONO

I am sorry for what they did to
you.

WANDER

Don't apologize for other people.

He turns to her earnestly.

WANDER (CONT'D)

I had a dream last night-- first
one in a long time. You were in
it. You were standing in a garden.
Agro too. And it was the most
peaceful place in the world. No
one else within a crow's flight.

MONO

Where were you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER

I was there. I was watching you.

She smiles at the thought.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Back in the mines, they used to say, let them take everything else, but not what you dream. That's your way out. What you dream is what you chase.

MONO

You think it is possible to choose our own fate?

WANDER

Don't you get it? Fate is just a word they made up to hold us down.

They catch eyes. A moment of mutual hope. Kindred spirit.

EXT. CROSSROADS -- NIGHT

Early dawn. Mono returns Wander to the cage. He climbs back inside, but as he pulls the door shut-

SHE TOUCHES HIS HAND.

MONO

Tomorrow, I will go with you.

Wander is amazed. Then Mono reaches through the bars, bringing him close...

FOR AN INCREDIBLE FIRST KISS.

She scampers off, leaving a dumb grin on his face.

EXT. FARMER'S Paddock -- DAY

Mono feeds hens. She's happy today.

The FARMER stumbles out of the barn. Buzzkill to a wonderful morning. He shields his eyes in the sunlight. Scowls at Agro, asleep in the pasture.

FARMER (subtitled)

Strange demon. Used to eat all day. Now it's sleep sleep sleep.

Mono can smell his breath. He's drunk already. She tries not to let it dampen the mood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The farmer rinses his hands in a trough.

FARMER (CONT'D)
You too. Sleep all day. No chores.

MONO
I've had trouble sleeping.

He frowns, dries his hands, stumbles over.

FARMER
Too much trouble, you.

MONO
I didn't want to wake you.

FARMER
(laughs)
Says she didn't want to wake me...

Without warning he suddenly GRABS HER and spins her around. Inches from her face. Drunkenly spitting as he says...

FARMER (CONT'D)
I saw you last night.

And then he THROWS HER into the mud.

The chickens scatter. She crawls on her hands and knees to get away, but her father wails down brutally.

MONO
Father, please-

FARMER
Wretched girl! It is not enough to bring shame on this family, now you would defy Lord Emon?!

MONO
They're wrong about him!

FARMER
Who are you to question them?!

He kicks her further into the mud. Slurring:

FARMER (CONT'D)
You are a curse on this family. The spirits should have taken you instead of your mother.

Mono's eyes narrow. Something in her is rising... the abuse, the indignation, standing for it all these years...

...she wraps her fingers around a SPADE and-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CUTS HER FATHER'S HAND!

He recoils. Stares at the fresh blood. Shock. Pain.
Then intoxicated rage. Mono knows she's made a mistake.

MONO

Wait, father-

Without even considering his strength, he-

HURLS HER INTO THE BARN WALL

--her neck striking at the worst possible angle--

CRACK. A whimper emanates from her throat. It's the last sound she'll ever make. She goes LIMP.

Time slows down. Ripped from our hands.

Her father kneels before her. Nudges her gently.

FARMER

Mono...

He listens to her mouth. She's not breathing.

FARMER (CONT'D)

Mono...?!

Sobriety hits. The horror of what he's done.

EXT. FARMER'S Paddock -- DAY

Aftermath. Several horses are hitched near the barn. Native women tend to Mono's body, issuing incantations as they cloak her face in a ceremonial shroud.

Lord Emon regards the hysterical, sobbing farmer.

CHIEF WARRIOR (subtitled)

He caught her with the Hor-Un.

Emon cocks his head curiously towards the crossroads.

FARMER

I didn't mean to...

LORD EMON

You did no wrong. We bury her tonight.

He walks off. The chief warrior kneels beside the farmer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHIEF WARRIOR
*Be grateful. Tomorrow your fields
 will be green again.*

EXT. CROSSROADS -- DAY

Wander stirs at the sound of horses approaching. He looks up to see Lord Emon and two warriors circling the cage.

WANDER
 What do you want?

Emon draws from his cloak a PART OF MONO'S BLOODIED SHROUD. Tosses it to the ground.

Wander raises his eyes, incredulous. Breathing quickens.

WANDER (CONT'D)
 What did you do to her.

LORD EMON (subtitled)
 (to his men)
Take him to the Great Rock.

Emon kicks his horse and rides off.

WANDER
 WHAT DID YOU DO?!

Suddenly one of the warriors yanks open the cage and KNOCKS HIM OUT with the butt of his sword as we CUT TO-

EXT. FRONTIER CEMETERY -- EVENING

Tribal chants. Torches making their way toward the shrines of the local CEMETERY. The elders, in tunics and long masks, ride on horseback behind Lord Emon.

They drag a cart on which MONO'S CORPSE lies.

But we don't stay with it long, because we're thrown aggressively back to-

EXT. ROCKY PRECIPICE -- EVENING

WANDER

Being tossed to the cool quartz surface of a cliff. Hell of a wake-up call.

Two burly warriors stand over him, savoring their task.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WARRIOR (subtitled)
Time to die, Hor-Un.

They drag him to the edge of the precipice.

EXT. FRONTIER CEMETERY -- EVENING

Mono's procession approaches a series of ABOVE-GROUND TOMBS. Carved in slate. A small slit in each one, reflecting the tribal belief that the dead must be able to look back into the world of the living.

TIGHT FOCUS ON ONE TOMB. Its mouth is open. Waiting.

EXT. ROCKY PRECIPICE -- EVENING

Wander's feet drag on the ground. Beyond the cliff, a deep canyon. As if a fate is waiting for him...

A HAWK CIRCLES ABOVE

Catching his attention. Life unbound. And something in it sparks Wander back to fight. He can't give up.

As he's about to be pushed over, his hand grabs one of the men's armor-

AND PULLS THE WARRIOR WITH HIM!

The man screams out, catching himself on his partner's shoulder. The momentum takes all three men over!

EXT. FRONTIER CEMETERY -- EVENING

Two villagers rest Mono's shrouded body inside the tomb.

Behind them, her father utters a prayer, tears pouring down his cheeks -- honest sorrow.

EXT. ROCKY PRECIPICE -- EVENING

Wander holds onto the side of the ledge while below him-

THE BODY OF A FALLING WARRIOR

Plummets in slow motion, hundreds of feet to a gruesome end on the rocks below.

EXT. FRONTIER CEMETERY -- EVENING

Emon stands before Mono's tomb.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORD EMON (subtitled)
*For the good of the village, we
 lay this cursed spirit in its
 rightful place.*

His warriors slide the top half of the stone shut.

EXT. ROCKY PRECIPICE -- EVENING

Wander and the other warrior cling to the eroding side of the cliff. They struggle -- against the elements and each other -- to climb back over the ledge. The roots tear off in their hands.

Finally, Wander manages to get up first. His hands are bloodied, his knuckles raw. He gasps for breath, but-

THE WARRIOR

Hoists himself back up too. He draws a hunting knife and prepares to bear down when-

THE ERODING GROUND FALLS OUT FROM UNDER HIM

And the warrior slides back over the ledge!

EXT. FRONTIER CEMETERY -- EVENING

Mono has been sealed inside the tomb.

Emon and the rest of the procession march away.

EXT. FRONTIER VILLAGE -- NIGHT

Wander staggers through the empty town. Clinging to his bloodied hands. Eyes vacant. Looking to get out.

Then something curious happens.

A LIGHT

Draws his attention. Fleeting and mysterious. Stretched across the ground with long tendrils, dancing in the moonlight, leading Wander's eyes towards-

LORD EMON'S SANCTUARY, where the tendrils withdraw beneath the door.

INT. LORD EMON'S SANCTUARY -- NIGHT

Wander steps inside. It seems to be empty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Except hanging above the fire is THE ANCIENT SWORD. The tendrils swirling around it. Like it's calling to him. Beckoning him closer.

But as he walks towards it-

A GUARD

Violently clocks him over the head. A BURLY WARRIOR is standing behind him, armed with a club.

Wander looks up at him in fear. A miscalculation. There's no way he could outmatch an armed man of this size. The warrior kicks him into a corner. Wander tries to stagger back, but lands against one of the idols.

STARING UP AT ITS VISAGE

Looming above him. Roaring down.

The warrior grabs a piece of pottery and crushes it over Wander's head. He hits the ground.

Now the warrior is about to swing the club when-

A BLINDING BURST OF LIGHT

Emanates from the ancient sword, causing the warrior to shield his eyes before he can strike again. For a moment he has no idea what's happening. Then he sees where the light is coming from and staggers back in fear.

Wander looks up incredulously. LIGHT swirls from the blade. Dancing around him protectively. Telling him it's all right.

So he stands.

While the burly warrior cowers in fear, Wander reaches towards the fire...

FLAMES BENDING AWAY FROM HIS WRIST

Allowing him to GRASP the handle just as-

--VISIONS FLASH BEFORE HIS EYES--

THE WINGS OF THE HAWK

Snatching up the white-tailed lizard and carrying it high into the moonlit sky. Flapping once, twice, three times.

We've seen this before.

Soaring over THE BORDERLANDS WILDERNESS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONO'S VOICE (O.S.)
Shaman have banished a spirit that
can revive souls of the dead.

THE ANCIENT SWORD

Shining out a bright burst of light through the sanctuary's
doors, over the distant forest, all the way towards the
SACRED GATES of that strange forbidden land.

Mono is standing there.

INSIDE A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN. Just like Wander's dream. A
serene setting. She is at peace. Agro is beside her.

MONO'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You think it is possible to choose
our own fate?

Doves lift from her feet. She turns to the sky and smiles.

It's a place of peace. Of destiny.

Then we suddenly-

ZOOM BACKWARDS

Out through the sacred gates, over the Borderlands, into
the sanctuary and all the way BACK TO-

WANDER

Withdrawing the sword from the fire. It GLOWS in his
hands. Behind him, the burly warrior flees.

Wander has never felt more powerful. And for the first
time, this young slave senses a destiny waiting for him.

EXT. FARMER'S Paddock -- NIGHT

Agro stands in the pasture, watching the distant lights
of the fading procession.

He hears someone behind him...

It's WANDER. The sword sheathed at his waist. Bow and
arrow on his back. Purpose in his eyes.

WANDER
What do you say we leave this place.

He takes the horse by the reins.

EXT. FRONTIER CEMETERY -- NIGHT

Two warriors vigilantly guard the graveyard gates. One of them detects MOVEMENT in the darkness.

WARRIOR (subtitled)
Who's out there?

No response. Both guards draw crossbows.

A RISING NOISE. The galloping of hooves. A large, monolithic form moving straight towards them. Barreling would be a better word. Like a bat out of hell...

AGRO. Wander clings to his back, keeping low because this horse is on an unstoppable war-path.

The guards don't know what to do. Before they can fire arrows the stallion easily knocks them aside and-

BATTERING-RAMS THROUGH THE LOCKED GATES!

Wander arrives in front of Mono's sealed tomb and leaps off his horse. He stares through the eye-slot. Her shrouded body lies within.

His hands pry at the stones. He hits desperately at the tomb. IT ROCKS SLIGHTLY. The stone shakes at its base.

WANDER
Help me, Agro!

Agro comes over and together they put all their weight into it. The tomb TOPPLES. Crashing sideways and splintering in two.

MONO'S SHROUDED BODY ROLLS OUT.

Wander quickly sweeps her into his arms, holding her close. Only now does the weight of her death finally set in.

STARING AT HER STILL FACE

The enormity of the task before him. He's got to bring her back.

He's about to lift her onto the horse when-

A NOISE behind him.

THE FARMER has returned to his daughter's grave with flowers. He's staring at Wander in shock. Beholding the ancient sword around his waist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER (CONT'D)

I can save her.

And in the farmer's eyes, we see a vague glimpse -- for the first time -- of clarity.

FARMER

Go.

Wander nods. Throws her onto his horse and rides off.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. VALLEY PLAIN -- TWILIGHT

THE PRESENT.

Wind passes over the still terrain of the Forbidden Land.

Debris and rubble strewn across the valley. The aftermath of the fight with the Colossus.

WANDER is lying on the ground where we left him. He stirs. Shakes himself off, disoriented. Then he sees the crumbled body of Valus and everything floods back.

He hears HOOVES nearby. Agro has found a way around the wall of rock and re-joined his friend.

The young man rises to a knee, still sore.

WANDER

Guess you missed all the fun.

Agro stares at him. If there's something he wants to say, he can't say it. But he's focused on-

TRACES OF BLACK BLOOD staining Wander's tunic.

WANDER (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

Just then, A CRACK OF THUNDER.

They look up to see a HOLE opening in the clouds.

A SHAFT OF LIGHT

Suddenly shines out from the rocky remains of Valus, soaring upwards into the heavens. It's like the sky has mysteriously parted for this light to pass through.

Moments later, the light DISAPPEARS and the sky closes.

Wander looks ahead, towards the path before them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Beyond it, the distant DARK FORTRESS.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Guess we can't turn back now.

EXT. FRONTIER VILLAGE -- DAY

Lord Emon's sanctuary.

The chief warrior and two others kneel outside.

NOISES of Emon storming behind closed doors. Metal being thrown against metal. No idea what he's up to.

WARRIOR #1 (subtitled)
How is it possible.

CHIEF WARRIOR
Shut up. Both of you.

WARRIOR #2
*Three hundred years it's been
silent. Now it wakes for him?*

CHIEF WARRIOR
*You don't know that. You don't
know the sword spoke to him-*

Suddenly the doors burst open and Emon emerges. Furious and focused. Dragging behind him a freshly-tuned saddle.

The warriors bow. The chief warrior joins him.

CHIEF WARRIOR (CONT'D)
The men are beginning to wonder.

He ignores him. Throws the saddle atop a WHITE MARE, then mounts. The others gather expectantly.

WARRIOR #1
Lord Emon, what do we do?

He slips on the OWL'S MASK like a declaration of war.

LORD EMON
We are going to the Forbidden Land.

The warriors exchange stunned glances. Did he just say what they thought he said...?

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
*He's just a boy. Do you understand?
A common thief. We're going to
hunt him. We'll slit his throat.*
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
*And we'll return what's taken to
its rightful place.*

And then he moves out.

After a reluctant beat, everyone follows. A pack of warriors -- building steam. Riding furiously with their leader through the village gates.

Riding like hell.

EXT. GEYSER FIELD -- TWILIGHT

AN OPEN DUNE. A sandy plain stretching for miles. Wind limits our visibility. And most unsettling of all... COLD WATER GEYSERS explode periodically from the earth.

Wander and Agro narrowly avoid one such geyser, staggering back. The young man steadies his horse.

WANDER
Whoa!

He gazes around. Vague outlines of cliffs border either side of the valley. No sense of where to go.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Let's find some cover.

As they move closer to the cliff wall, they see A MAN-MADE STONE FACE built under an overhang.

They curiously approach.

There's writing on the enormous wall. Chiseled in rock, LARGE ANCIENT GLYPHS written in a dead language.

WANDER (CONT'D)
I think it's some kind of history.

He climbs down and points to the image of A GREAT MECCA.

WANDER (CONT'D)
A prosperous civilization.

Buildings in ruin. Devastation. Foundations crumble.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Torn apart by some war.

A GIANT DEMON towering over armies of warriors, pulverizing them with massive fists. HORNS on its head. A frightening, unspeakable evil. It looks just like a Colossus -- only larger, more terrifying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER (CONT'D)

What is that...?

Nothing follows. History suddenly brought to a halt.

Wander focuses on the giant demon. The rising fear that he's going to have to face this thing some day...

Suddenly Agro grows apprehensive. Begins to back off.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Agro, what's wrong?

A RUMBLING NOISE behind them. The wall seems to be shaking. Wander looks up as-

A FISSURE

Strikes from the top of the cave, slicing through the drawings like a crack under tremendous pressure.

THE WALLS BURST OPEN

Debris flying everywhere. And barreling out from the darkness while emitting an EARSPLITTING SHRIEK is-

BASARAN. Another Colossus. A four-legged creature resembling a massive reptile. Its vertebrae stick out sharply along its ridged back. It rises on four arachnid legs and BELLOWS again.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Agro!

Wander sprints towards his horse. Basaran focuses its green eyes down on the boy and-

KINETIC ENERGY ZOOMS FROM ITS PUPILS

Coursing with electricity, cutting rapidly through the humidity and HITTING Wander in the back! He stumbles, shakes off the pain, pulls himself into Agro's saddle.

WANDER (CONT'D)

All right boy, let's see you run.

THEY SPRINT AWAY THROUGH THE DESERT.

Geysers explode in every direction. Behind them, Basaran bears down and fires more electric bolts. At this speed the flying bolts can't catch up to them.

WANDER (CONT'D)

It's working! Keep it up!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But Basaran is smarter than that. With a few massive strides the Colossus sidesteps its position to block their path, preventing them from escaping.

The Colossus rears again on its hind talons. The earth trembles. Wander and his horse stumble in their wake.

And then Agro does something unexpected...

HE CUTS LEFT

Sprinting straight under the creature!

WANDER (CONT'D)
Agro, what are you doing?!

Wander tries to fight against him, but the horse is acting on his own accord -- the stubborn free spirit he is.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Now is not the time!

Basaran STOMPS DOWN, its talons narrowly missing them as they precariously thread the needle.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Damn it Agro, if you don't get us
out of here I'm going to-

Then Wander sees that Agro is drawing the Colossus towards-
A GEYSER about to burst beneath Basaran's new position.

WANDER (CONT'D)
You clever horse...

The flume of water SPRAYS UPWARDS, hitting the creature directly in the belly and causing it to-

FLIP UPSIDE-DOWN ON ITS BACK!

Its legs flail wildly in the air.

Agro now sprints to the edge of the creature's overturned shell, still at full gallop while Wander courageously-

LEAPS OFF

And mantles onto the shell!

He looks frantically for a weak spot, but even on its underbelly this creature has nothing to attack.

The creature rolls. It's starting to right itself. Wander hangs onto the edge of its shell, now flipped upside-down until he can swing his legs up and steady himself...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ON TOP OF ITS SHELL.

Basaran is distracted by Agro -- cornering the horse beneath its talons. He is lost in the haze of disrupted sand, trying desperately to run free.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Get out of there, Agro!

Agro darts left and right, narrowly avoiding another hoof.

Wander crawls up the vertebrae along Basaran's spine. He knows he doesn't have much time to help his friend.

THE SWORD BEGINS TO PULSE

Showing him towards a GLOWING SIGIL on the back of its neck. The same strange symbol he saw with Valus! Wander runs towards it, about to stab when-

BASARAN BUCKS ITS HEAD

Throwing Wander forward, nothing to catch him until he-

CLINGS TO THE BRIDGE OF ITS NOSE

And finds himself right in the path of its glowing eyes.

Basaran focuses on the young man now, forgetting all about Agro, who flees to safety.

Its eyes LIGHT UP. About to fire.

Wander tries to pull up, but doesn't have the strength.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Come on!

With a desperate swing of his legs he manages to get just enough momentum to flip over the top of Basaran's brow while the electricity shoots past him!

He lands on top of its head and wastes no time, raising the sword over the mark of the sigil and-

STABBING IT THROUGH THE COLOSSUS'S NECK!

A geyser of black blood sprays out. Basaran screams and topples sideways. Wander is thrown violently to the ground, smashing into the sand and sliding to a halt just next to where the creature's hulking body-

CRASHES DOWN. Sand and stone spray everywhere.

And then, silence. Both Wander and the Colossus lie motionless on the field of battle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Agro approaches, fearful for his injured friend.

BLACK SMOKE TENDRILS

Suddenly rise from Basaran's corpse and PLUNGE THROUGH WANDER'S BODY. Agro notices a porous energy flowing into him, like some kind of mysterious transference.

And as it does, Wander begins to awaken.

He's coughing up sand. His fingers are bent, bruised up. The harsh price of battling a giant. When he starts to rise, a shooting pain runs through his head. He clings to his temples -- which are beginning to show BRUISES -- until the pain subsides.

Finally he looks at the horse and GRINS with a new-found appreciation.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Remind me never to doubt you again.

EXT. BLASTED LANDS -- TWILIGHT

The pair has paused to rest in the desert. They're tired, bruised up, and weary.

Wander holds a writhing WHITE-TAILED LIZARD.

WANDER

Sorry little guy.

HE PULLS THE TAIL OFF. Lizard blood oozes onto his hands. Nasty. The small creature squeaks. Wander releases it and lets it scamper off, liberated from its appendage.

Then he stares at the unappetizing tail.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Believe it or not, these things are supposed to be nutritional.

He closes his eyes and TAKES A BITE. Tastes goddamned AWFUL. He forces himself to swallow, feeling the scales ooze down his gullet, then offers the rest to Agro.

WANDER (CONT'D)

You should eat. You need it too.

Agro leans closer, cautious and guarded.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Now the trick is-

The horse quickly DEVOURS the tail out of his hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER (CONT'D)

Right, I forgot. You're a horse.

Wander wipes his hands and stares towards the mountains ahead, drenched in perpetual sepia haze. Beyond them, the looming spire of the DARK FORTRESS.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Think we have to pass through those mountains. Looks like another day, maybe two. Think we can keep up the pace?

The horse doesn't indicate it's a problem.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Good thing I've got you.
(grins)

Demon spirit that you are.

He picks up the ANCIENT SWORD. Wipes BLACK BLOOD from its blade. Studying its curious texture.

Then he notices a corresponding BLACK MARK on his shoulder, right where the tendrils went through. Tries to wipe it off, but can't.

Agro stops chewing, hones in on this.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Don't worry-- it didn't hurt.

Agro isn't convinced.

WANDER (CONT'D)

I'm fine, Agro. We've got bigger things to worry about.

Wander flexes his injured shoulder. Noticing how tired he is. He lies down on his sore back.

WANDER (CONT'D)

(fading)
You know, I could use a rest. When was the last time we slept anyway. Have you noticed, since we got here the sun hasn't set once...?

But he's OUT before he can finish the sentence. Agro watches him with great concern.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP --- **DREAM SEQUENCE**

A BRIGHT, DIFFUSED LIGHT

SOUNDS OF WHISPERS

Feminine. MONO'S VOICE. Very distant. Uttering chants in her native language. We can't hear the words.

And then MONO'S BODY sits up on the pedestal, silhouetted against the light. Reaching out to us.

WANDER staggers towards her in the aisle. Desperate.

WANDER

Mono...

Then he HEARS A NOISE behind him. HOOVES trampling stone. Clattering of metal. He spins around to see-

LORD EMON AND HIS MEN

Waiting in the Shrine's entryway, masked, weapons drawn.

Staring straight at us.

WANDER (CONT'D)

No... there wasn't enough time.
Leave us alone!

Wander stumbles backwards as the warriors move in and-

EXT. BLASTED LANDS -- TWILIGHT --- **THE PRESENT**

WANDER AWAKES. Gasping for breath. Terrified.

Nearby, Agro glances up curiously. Wander brings himself to his feet. Urgency restored.

WANDER

Shouldn't have slept. We have to hurry.

EXT. BORDERLANDS FOREST -- NIGHT

HOOVES TRAMPLING WATER.

Rain pours down as SIX HORSES emerge from the cover of brush. Lord Emon and his men. They are standing before...

THE ANCIENT STONE COLONNADE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

That Wander first passed through in the beginning of the story. Obscured, protected by centuries of growth. The entrance to the Forbidden Land.

The warriors drop to their knees. Awe-struck.

Lord Emon approaches the steps.

CHIEF WARRIOR (subtitled)
(nervous)
Lord Emon...

LORD EMON
The boy has given us no choice.

He looks out at the rest of the men.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
Now is not the time for fear.

Then, leading by example, he takes his horse by the reins and heads towards the OPENING.

The men reluctantly follow.

Approaching the LIGHT-FILLED PASSAGEWAY...

Walking timidly on nervous feet...

And finally heading into the corridor as light SWALLOWS THEM and spits them out into-

EXT. FORBIDDEN LAND ENTRANCE -- TWILIGHT

BRIGHT, MURKY HAZE. The transition from night to day.

The warriors are amazed, but Lord Emon doesn't bother himself with that. He's too focused.

INT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP -- TWILIGHT

TRACKING WITH THE HORSEMEN

As they ride into the Shrine.

No signs of life. The idols flank them silently on all sides. Terrifying, but harmless. Above, the light of the rotunda seems dormant. Nothing here except for-

MONO'S CORPSE

Lying on the pedestal.

Emon stands over her body and utters an INCANTATION.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The chief warrior comes up behind him.

CHIEF WARRIOR (subtitled)
He's gone.

LORD EMON
Yes. It has already begun.

Emon turns to the valley floor. Staring at HOOFPRIINTS in the sand. A trail for them to follow.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
*He's brave. I'll give him that.
But foolish beyond all reckoning.*

EXT. BLASTED LANDS -- TWILIGHT

We're back with Wander and Agro in the dune. Trotting over cracks that run through the caked dirt.

Ahead of them, a CLIFF FACE. Wide and long on all sides. A dead end. There is nowhere else to go. But as they get closer, Wander begins to discern-

A STONE TEMPLE carved into the bluff. It features a gaping BLACK MOUTH -- a doorway inviting them under the mountain.

They silently move closer.

INT. UNDERGROUND CORRIDORS -- TWILIGHT

Blackness. All-encompassing.

WANDER
I hate the dark.

Wander and Agro walk through with increasing apprehension. Barely able to see their next step.

A GUST OF WIND

Rushes towards them, blowing back Wander's hair and causing him to shield his eyes. Moments later it settles. Then another GUST picks up from behind them, pulling in the opposite direction. Strange.

Finally they turn a corner and see-

GLOWING TORCHES. Embers burning perpetually. Affording just enough light to see the passage ahead.

And on the walls...

MORE GLYPHS. Highlighting variations on the same theme:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DESTRUCTION at the hands of the enormous horned demon. It looms inside the Shrine of Worship, about to crush a WARRIOR in a ceremonial tunic.

And then the images fade off. All that remains is foreign lettering. And that one phrase again, written in many languages so as to get its message across:

GO BACK

Wander steps away, nervous about the message's implication.

Agro fixes on the image of the horned demon, as if he's beginning to understand its troubling promise.

Another GUST OF WIND. This one blows out the torches, immersing them in darkness. One more gust comes from the opposite direction, and the torches burn once more.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Agro. Did you see that?

Another gust. The lights turn off... then ON.

And Wander realizes what's at play here...

WANDER (CONT'D)

I don't think that's wind.

...it's the BREATHING of a very large creature.

He draws his sword. It's beginning to PULSE. They move deeper into the passage.

APPROACHING A BRIGHT LIGHT

Flooding into the corridors-

INT. UNDERGROUND TEMPLE -- CONTINUOUS

A GIANT SKYLIGHT

Pouring down from a crater on top of the mountain they're standing inside. This must be the heart of the structure.

To describe the scale of this place is difficult -- at least in terms we use to describe our world. Its stone blocks are so large they would take a thousand men to lift. They support giant archways that could span a canyon's length.

And indeed, a canyon is what we are looking at. Because the temple does not stretch above where Wander stands, but hundreds of feet beneath him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There is no staircase to reach the floor. Whatever inhabits this place has no need for stairs.

And whatever inhabits this place doesn't seem to be here.

The breathing has ceased. Just a hollow silence.

Wander and Agro head for a nearby doorway when-

THE SWORD PULSES MORE URGENTLY.

Wander draws it and the blade suddenly ATTRACTS LIGHT from the rotunda, reflecting a a PRISM that shines straight towards the center of the floor below.

Like it's trying to tell him something.

He peers down the face of the great wall. A look of TREPIDATION as he realizes what it's asking him to do.

WANDER

Only thing I hate more than the dark... is heights.

Agro neighs. He knows what Wander is about to do, and he doesn't like it.

WANDER (CONT'D)

You see that path ahead? I want you to go there and wait for me on the other side. Can you do that?

The horse twists his head from side to side.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Agro, I'm not asking. Okay? I'll meet you on the other side.

Finally Agro turns and obliges.

Wander tiptoes to the limit of the ledge. Directly beneath him is a wall checkered with small vents... air pockets? Whatever they are, if he holds onto them, he might just be able to descend.

Behind him, Agro is lingering at the doorway. Like he's not sure whether he should be leaving his friend.

Wander tosses a pebble, annoyed.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Agro! Get out of here.

The horse reluctantly retreats.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Wander sheathes the sword and lowers his feet over the edge. His sandals slip precariously on the dusty stone surface, but he manages to stabilize.

And he descends, hand over hand, down the sheer face.

WE CRANE OUT

Watching as the young man undertakes the daunting task of lowering himself into the heart of the temple. He seems like an intruder, a thief sneaking in to snag a prize.

Finally he reaches the bottom. Lands on the dust-lined stone floor.

The temple leads across a long aisle beneath the skylight. It seems like a giant enclosure, filled with vents to pass air beneath the mountain. But still...

No sign of a Colossus.

Wander draws his sword. It's glowing. He puts his hands to his mouth and WHISTLES. The shrill noise reverberates through the thousands of pockets of space all around him.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Hello...?

Nothing. No response.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Okay. I'm leaving...

He turns to climb back out of there when suddenly-

A MECHANIZED RUMBLING

Emanates from the wall he climbed down...

...which is LOWERING into the ground!

These series of vents were in fact the lining of a GIANT DOOR, hundreds of feet tall, now dropping into the floor. Smoke and dust pour out from the opening, and through the haze we make out the towering shape of...

BARBA. A humanoid Colossus, standing on two legs, no weapons but with massive arms and A BUSHY GREY BEARD.

The creature ROARS out -- the now-familiar stench of its hot, putrid breath.

Wander steadies himself. Spins the sword confidently in his hands. A glimmer of growing faith in himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER (CONT'D)

Looks like you're short a weapon.

He runs towards the creature's foot just as Barba lifts a fist and-

SMASHES THE GROUND

The floor trembles. Tiles rise up in fast succession.

But Wander's anticipated this, and he leaps over the rising floor, skipping across it with great confidence-

AND GRABBING ONTO BARBA'S HAND

Just as it lifts up and sweeps him into the air!

He clings to one of the Colossus's enormous fingers. Reaching a soaring height. The floor is a hundred feet below. But it's not getting to him now, because Wander has done this before. He braces himself on its wrist, about to run up the arm when-

HE IS SUDDENLY PLUCKED UP!

Barba had predicted this move, and now holds him like a man would hold a gnat. Wander loses the sword. It clatters a hundred feet to the floor below.

WANDER (CONT'D)

That's not good.

He's completely helpless and staring straight ahead at...

THE CREATURE'S GREEN EYES.

Bearing down on him like the visage of death.

And for just a moment, we see fear returning to Wander.

The creature FLICKS HIM INTO A WALL!

He hits hard and bends like a rag doll, dropping to a ledge below, which crumbles under his weight and sends him careening-

IN A FREE-FALL TOWARDS THE FLOOR!

A deep THUD as he lands. The breath has been taken right out of him. His shoulder has hit hard. Frankly he's lucky to be alive.

And then the pain sets in. Deep and resonating. Wander groans, opens his eyes just in time to see-

BARBA'S FIST coming down towards him!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He crawls toward a low wall and it SHATTERS -- pieces of debris falling everywhere. He collapses under their weight, covered in dust. He's bordering on passing out.

A GLIMMER OF LIGHT

Catches his eyes. The sword GLOWING nearby.

Wander tries to stand amidst the rubble.

Barba looks down at him, kicks the sword out of the way.

Wander continues to limp forward.

Barba begins to LAUGH. A deep, bellowing chuckle. Like a creature who's just toying with its diminutive prey. It takes a step towards him and-

SLAMS ITS BOOT DOWN

Between Wander and the ancient sword, sending it clattering down the long aisle into a crack in the wall.

Wander falls backwards. Disheartened.

Another fist pummels the ground, throwing him into a wall. Wander YELLS OUT as he hits. We can hear a crunching sound from his shoulder. It's been completely dislocated.

WANDER (CONT'D)

At least give me a chance!

He cowers behind a fallen column. Barba lurks nearby. Wander knows it will soon find him. He closes his eyes, trying to breathe through the pain.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Come on, Wander...

Suddenly the column he's hiding behind is LIFTED into the air. Barba has uncovered him once again.

Wander rises and staggers through Barba's legs. He sets his sights on-

THE COLONNADE AT THE END OF THE AISLE. The crack in the wall where the ancient sword went -- a crack by Barba's standards, but for Wander it could be ample hiding space.

If he can get there.

His run has been reduced to a limp. He's broken, clinging to his arm, hobbling along on a sprained ankle.

Barba strides towards him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Wander doesn't want to look back. He continues to limp, one bleeding hand on his banged-up shoulder, finally-

DIVING BEHIND THE COLONNADE

Just as Barba's fist slams the ground. The creature can't get into the crack. It roars out in frustration.

Now Wander lies with his back to the column. He reaches for the sword with his bad arm, but-

HOWLS IN PAIN. His shoulder is completely immobilized.

WANDER (CONT'D)

(to himself)

You're going to go down without a fight? Fight, damnit!

He takes a deep breath, a growing fear of what he knows he must do. He grits his teeth.

PUSHES HIS SHOULDER INTO THE WALL

With building force, propping his feet against the opposite column, harder and harder, the pain getting worse and worse, tears pouring from his eyes, until-

POP! The shoulder snaps back into place.

Wander gasps and exhales loudly. The pain has ceased!

TWO HANDS

Suddenly drop into view. Barba is getting down on its hands and knees. As the creature lowers, its full beard comes into frame...

...dragging on the floor.

Which gives Wander an idea. He rises to his feet, clenching the sword weakly and-

LATCHES ONTO THE THICK STRANDS OF HAIR!

Barba rears back in surprise. It stumbles into the walls, frantically fumbling about while Wander scrambles his way through the knots of wiry grey hair. Spiders and insects crawl around him, surprised at the disruption of their natural home.

Finally he reaches the creature's shoulder and then its head. He draws the sword and refracts the light to reveal-

A GLOWING SIGIL just above its ear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He grits his eyes with the determination of an impassioned, battle-hardened warrior. He's becoming an old pro.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Is this what you want?!

And he raises the sword as we CUT AWAY TO-

EXT. TEMPLE EXIT -- TWILIGHT

A BELLOWING CRY

From the dark passage.

Agro, waiting outside, backs off.

A long, deep, resonating silence follows.

And then timid footsteps. Agro steels himself, ready for anything to emerge from that darkness.

A DARK, EMACIATED FORM

Staggers closer. Stumbling, limping, clinging to one of its arms, leering through the haze. Like something out of a nightmare.

Agro lowers his head. Ready for anything...

Until the figure emerges in the light to reveal it is WANDER, covered in the black blood of a Colossus.

WANDER

Agro. It's just me.

He reaches out with a blood-drenched hand -- now seeing why the horse was alarmed. He stoops to a puddle. Staring at his scarred, stained reflection.

For a brief moment, this injured young warrior almost looks like a monster.

EXT. VALLEY PLAIN -- TWILIGHT

A CLOUD OF HAZE obscures our view. Sounds of HOOVES.

LORD EMON AND HIS MEN

Move into frame. Visibility is down to a few feet. The men are terrified. Weapons drawn in anticipation.

But Lord Emon is cool. Unmoving. Eyes searching.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As the wind breaks, he sees something up ahead. He climbs off his horse. Walks through the haze with purpose.

The men watch him curiously until-

THE CLOUD CLEARS

And reveals what looks like a LARGE HILL in front of them.

Except it's not a hill. It's the body of the felled VALUS. Crumbled to stone, but still retaining its awful shape.

The men gasp in awe. This is a creature of legend, but they never dreamed they would one day see it. The scale is staggering. Even in death it still evokes fear.

Lord Emon runs his hands along the course stone. He can't believe what the boy has done.

LORD EMON (subtitled)
Not possible...

Then he suddenly kneels. Pulls from a pouch-

SEVERAL STONE FIGURINES. Replicas of the idols.

But as soon as he touches them...

THREE OF THEM CRUMBLE IN HIS HANDS.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
No...

He frantically arranges the others in a line, uttering phrases in his native language. The other men observe his ritual. He's growing more intense. Maniacally rearranging the idols -- which remain mostly unseen.

CHIEF WARRIOR
Lord Emon. What has he done?

Finally he stops. Looks up at their frightened faces.

LORD EMON
He has killed three.

They can't believe it. Emon rises grimly.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
*You want to fear him? Go ahead.
He's earned that much.*

He turns towards the distant sky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
*But the true test is about to befall
him.*

EXT. MISTY FALLS -- TWILIGHT

Wander and Agro trudge through a heavy marsh. Moist soil. Agro's hooves sink in all the way to his knees.

Wander keeps his eyes ahead. Every joint hurts, but he's starting not to feel it. He's growing stronger. More warrior-like. Numb to the pain. Unafraid.

Ahead of them, through thick oak trees they can make out A STONE STRUCTURE. An archway half-buried in a bog. Water oozes and steams from its joints. We realize it must be some kind of a dam.

SOUNDS OF A BIRD circling above the trees.

Wander turns to the sky. Searching for it. Takes him a moment to notice that Agro has STOPPED.

WANDER
What's the matter?

He goads the horse in the stirrups, but no movement.

Finally, Wander climbs down. Sees that Agro's front horseshoe is broken. Blood gushes from the wound.

WANDER (CONT'D)
What, you're hurt?

Agro neighs and pulls back.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Agro, this is nothing. You survived
tied up and beaten before.

He pulls on the reins, but Agro is holding his ground.

WANDER (CONT'D)
What is your problem?

The young man and horse stare off. There's something else at work here. It's not just the hoof that's stopping him. Agro is looking at Wander's damaged appearance and sees something different. He's growing wary.

Wander begins to sense this reluctance.

WANDER (CONT'D)
What is this really about, huh?
You're afraid? Is that it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Agro clops his hooves. It's impossible for him to communicate, and the feeling is incredibly frustrating.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Agro, don't you see how close we are? You're not giving up. I won't accept it. Now stop it!

The horse pulls away. Wander reaches for his bite-

WANDER (CONT'D)
I said stop it!

-and maybe he pulls a little harder than he thought.

Agro flips like a switch -- a defense mechanism. He swings his head around, SMACKING WANDER'S HAND. This causes Wander to lash back in anger, raising his fist as if he were about to hit the animal-

-until he stops.

Agro's head is tilted -- waiting for the beating from this young warrior. Like he suspected it would be coming.

Wander pulls back. Knows he went too far.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Agro. I'm sorry.

Agro makes up his mind. Screw this. He retreats.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Come back. I didn't mean to.

The horse continues to limp off.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Where are you going?!

Nothing. The horse has given up on him.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Fine, you damn horse. Turn your back on me after all I did for you. How does that make you feel?!

He kicks the mud.

WANDER (CONT'D)
You're a coward! You hear me? You're a coward and I don't need you! And neither does she!

But as the horse vanishes into the mist, Wander immediately begins to regret his words.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He turns back towards the stone structure ahead. ANGER begins to harden him...

EXT. RAMPARTS -- TWILIGHT

Tall stone SPIRES create a perimeter around a giant lake. It's like a quarry -- impossible to enter.

Wander surveys the walls of the old dam. They're too steep to climb. He looks into the water, sees the base of the wall stop just below the surface. In other words-

He can swim below it.

WHICH HE DOES

Doing a breast stroke beneath the bottom, a great distance past eroding stone and wet moss, finally emerging-

ON THE OTHER SIDE. Gasping for breath, pulling himself up onto ruins rising out of the water.

A VAST LAKE

Stretches before him. Mist rising from its surface. Opaque and filthy. Small stone islands in imprecise locations, like they were once the foundation of another structure. And a single spire in the distance -- a half-collapsed column rising in unlikely fashion.

WANDER

Now what?

The sword begins to PULSE. Wander readies himself.

Just then, a GUST OF WIND. A flapping noise.

And a loud, distant SCREECH.

The same sound of the BIRD we heard before. And this time we see it passing above. Kind of like a hawk. But the scale here is distorted. Because this creature is much LARGER than your ordinary bird...

This is AVION. A furred aerial Colossus with stone wings a hundred feet in span.

It perches on the half-collapsed spire. Unmoving...

And focuses its gaze on Wander.

Wander glares back, unafraid.

WANDER (CONT'D)

You want to fight? Come at me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The creature does not move.

WANDER (CONT'D)
I don't have all day!!!

He draws an arrow from his quiver. Loads it into the bow and FIRES...

SAILING WITH THE ARROW

Across the lake, soaring towards the Colossus and-

CLATTERING OFF ITS TALON.

Avion stares down at the bouncing object. Just a harmless stick. But it knows what the object's purpose was. And the creature grows angry.

With a LOUD CRY, it spreads its wings and TAKES FLIGHT, soaring straight towards where Wander stands.

The young man quickly sheathes his bow and draws the sword.

WANDER (CONT'D)
All right you bastard, let's fly.

Avion draws closer. Coming in for the kill. And just as its open mouth is about to swallow him-

WANDER DUCKS LEFT

Avoiding the beak and grabbing a patch of fur on its wing!

The creature darts past only to notice it is now CARRYING the young man with it!

So it ascends. High into the sky.

Wander holds on tight as the lake bed gets further and further below. They're now hundreds of feet in the air. Higher than he's ever been before.

Avion performs an abrupt turn, trying to buck him off.

Wander manages to steady himself in the small of its back, positioning his legs between two vertebrae and giving himself the leverage he needs to hold his sword.

To his left, the blade shines out and creates a GLOWING SIGIL on the side of its wing. Wander locks in on it.

He's about to climb there when-

AVION DIVES

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Plunging with increasing speed towards the water's surface and now cresting just above it. Wander is thrown sideways but grabs the back of its wing, holding on as-

HIS LEGS GRAZE THE WATER!

At this speed it's like concrete.

He pulls himself back onto the wing and uses the flat position of its glide to crawl over the SIGIL-

AND HE STABS IT!

The Colossus screams and tilts upwards, ascending once again. BLACK BLOOD pours from its wound.

Wander is thrown backwards, tumbling down the full length of its body until he manages to grab hold of a patch of fur on the flapping tail.

They're moving straight up. A vertical rise.

Wander looks around curiously. Why isn't it dead?

Then his sword SHINES again, indicating ANOTHER SIGIL glowing on the right wing.

WANDER (CONT'D)

You're not making this easy, are you?

So he climbs up the length of the creature's back, even as it-

CORKSCREWS IN THE AIR!

Wind and mist fly by at dizzying speed. The air is growing thinner. Harder to breathe at this velocity. Out of control. Disoriented. They're pushing through the clouds.

But Wander's holding on. He's not backing off.

He finally reaches the second sigil-

AND STABS AGAIN

This time the creature SHRIEKS loudly. More black blood pours from its wound, and now both wings slow down. The flying Colossus goes limp, its ascent suddenly stopped...

...because it's dying.

Which means it's FALLING!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER (CONT'D)

Should have thought that one through
a little better...

They dive in a flat spin towards the water. Velocity
picking up. Dead weight accelerating. Thousands of feet.

Wander positions himself between its two limp wings, trying
to pull at them and create some sense of drag.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Pull up, you damn thing!

At the last moment the wings catch some of the wind and
absorb it -- like parachutes -- causing its body to arc
and almost FLATTEN OUT just before-

HITTING THE LAKE

The creature's stone body taking most of the impact.

PLUNGING INTO THE WATER

Gurgling, bubbling hysteria. Wander bursts to the surface
and gasps for breath amidst the turbulent waves.

And for just a moment, all is calm.

He begins to laugh. He's survived!

Until he hears A DISTANT GROAN.

OVERHEAD VIEW: as a giant underwater SHAPE slithers below.
A leviathan. Looming. Watching. Circling like a
predator. Its shadow dwarfs him in size.

And the smile drops from Wander's face.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Oh no-

A MONSTER EMERGES

Like a serpent's head roaring out from beneath. A
ferocious eel-like beast, caked in wet fur. HYDRUS.

Wander tries to swim for land, but the creature LUNGES
TOWARDS HIM, hitting him and causing him to DROP HIS SWORD-

--AS IT SINKS QUICKLY--

Wander takes a deep breath and DIVES...

INTO THE MURKY DEPTHS

Kicking hard, fingers inches from the sword's handle...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hydrus's enormous mouth suddenly pops out from the underwater haze. Ready to swallow him. Wander sees it coming. Wraps his fingers around the blade, then pushes off the creature's head and surges-

TO THE SURFACE.

Hydrus does another circle and comes in.

WANDER GRABS THE WET FUR ON ITS BACK!

Being pulled underwater, now along for the ride.

The creature's undulating body goes up and down. Every time it goes under, Wander draws in a breath and holds on. Then when it surfaces he sprints to the next hump.

The sword's LIGHT points him the way towards-

A SMALL FLAP

Just behind a spike on the creature's head. There's softness there. A slimy, oozing weakness. The SIGIL.

But before he can get to it-

HYDRUS ARCS HIGH OUT OF THE WATER...

...and then DIVES straight under!

Deeper and deeper. Into the heart of the abyss. Trying to lose Wander by drowning him.

Wander can feel his fading breath, but he holds on. Determined. Pulling himself inch by inch along its wet back, eyes fixed on the glowing sigil ahead of him, now right in front of him-

-and he STABS IT!

Even underwater we can hear the creature's grim SCREAM.

It's dying.

Wander swims for the surface while behind him the Colossus CONVULSES, causing a wake that pulls him down with it.

Finally the creature goes LIMP.

DARKNESS. No sense which way is up. Wander begins to run out of air. He's losing strength.

ON HIS FACE: as he gasps a bubble, his last breath...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

...and we watch it MOVE UP. Or, by this orientation, SIDEWAYS, which, as the camera turns, becomes "up" and now Wander knows which way he has to go...

SWIMMING WITH EVERYTHING HE'S GOT and finally-

EMERGING

On top of a small grassy island, gasping for breath. He's not smiling anymore. Words do not express the exhaustion, the utter fatigue, the brink of death...

...if only it were over.

Because without warning, without even a distant, thundering roar to let itself be known, suddenly-

THE ISLAND LIFTS

And we realize it's not an island...

But the furry back of yet another giant, angry COLOSSUS.

Massive hooves like those of a water buffalo. Stone structures are etched around it -- a camouflage to fool any potential attackers. This is PELAGIA.

It bucks and throws him off.

Wander somersaults through the air and lands hard on another stone platform nearby.

The sword clatters next to him.

Pelagia rears out of the water, towering above the surface with its two hooves raised. It SLAMS THEM DOWN on either side of Wander, lifting over him to get a better view.

Wander opens his eyes, prepared to accept death.

But when he does, he sees the sword pointing him towards-

ITS EXPOSED CHEST.

A SIGIL glowing on its underbelly!

Wander can't think. He can only react.

He grabs the sword with his free hand and raises it just as Pelagia bears down and-

IMPALES ITSELF!

The creature HOWLS in pain and then tumbles backwards. With one blow Wander's taken the enormous monster down-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

-and it's PULLING HIM WITH IT!

Plummeting with its mass deep into the lake. He's trying to withdraw the sword, but it's stuck in the grimy flesh. He didn't get a breath. Barely had time to even recover from before. He's losing hope until finally the creature-

TURNS TO STONE

Snapping the sword loose...

...into his limp hands.

Wander has run out of strength. His eyes are glazed over. He's floating weightless in the depths as...

BLACK TENDRILS

Swirl up from beneath. Many more than we've seen before. The tendrils from all three dead Colossi are reaching out together. They wind around each other -- intertwining like reeds and briefly giving birth to a new shape...

OF A HORNED DEMON

Made entirely of shadow. Looming in front of Wander. Dwarfing him in size. Pale, glowing eyes locked on him.

A moment of surreal, frightening calm. Of destiny.

Then the face DISSIPATES, the shadows returning to tendril form, which-

STAB THROUGH WANDER

Causing his body to gyrate and then go still.

Floating dead in the abyss.

Carried wherever the current may go...

EXT. MISTY FALLS -- TWILIGHT

A GIANT WATERFALL

Pours into a pool from the mountains above. Smooth flowing water, spitting out-

WANDER'S LIMP BODY, the sword floating next to him.

He drifts face-down, dead to rights. Chances are he could be gone already. Until-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOMETHING DRAGS HIM OUT OF FRAME as we-

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP --- **DREAM SEQUENCE**

BRIGHT, DIFFUSED LIGHT

MORE WHISPERING. It's Mono's voice again.

We see WANDER staggering forward again. He's inches away from her now. So close to his goal...

AND HE ARRIVES AT THE PEDESTAL.

Sweeps MONO up into his arms. Running his fingers across her cold cheek. Cherishing every bit of touch.

HER LIPS ARE MOVING. Uttering strange incantations.

WANDER

Mono... can you hear me?

And at the sound of his voice... HER EYES OPEN!

Wander can't believe it. He holds her tightly.

WANDER (CONT'D)

I'm almost there.

But she's just staring, dumbfounded. For a moment she doesn't recognize him. She reaches out to touch him. His injuries have begun to change his appearance.

She caresses his face, concerned. Frightened for him. Opens her mouth to speak, but has difficulty.

WANDER (CONT'D)

You don't have to say anything.

She pushes his hand away. More urgent now. And finally...

MONO

Wander... go back.

He stares at her panic-stricken face. Now he's growing scared too. Backing off in fear as-

INT. DARK CAVE -- TWILIGHT --- **THE PRESENT**

HE AWAKES. He's in a damp cave. Grim. His limbs hurt so much he can barely move. He's covered in dirt.

A SHADOW LOOMS NEARBY.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER

Who's there?

Movement. A shape creeping forward to reveal-

IT'S AGRO. He's the one who dragged him out of the water!

Wander is elated.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Agro! You came back. You stupid
horse, you came back!

The horse comes closer. Wander struggles to pull himself
up and embrace his snout, forehead to forehead.

WANDER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry... I can't do this without
you. I don't know what I'd do...

TEARS RUNNING TO HIS EYES...

He pulls the horse close like it's all he has left.

EXT. MISTY FALLS -- TWILIGHT

The warriors ride through wet marsh.

Lord Emon disembarks near a TREE. He's studying a set of
fresh hoofprints. The mud is still wet.

Behind him, the warriors climb down from their horses.
They're growing exhausted. They've been at this too long.

A CLAP OF THUNDER

Suddenly diverts Emon's attention to the clearing in the
distance, where-

CLOUDS ARE PARTING

And a SHAFT OF LIGHT has suddenly appeared in the sky.
Just like we saw with Valus. Like the spirits of the
felled Colossi are once again ascending into the heavens.

Emon urgently pushes through the trees, arriving at-

EXT. RAMPARTS -- TWILIGHT

The outer walls of the dam.

The shaft of light COURSES from the water into the clouds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORD EMON (subtitled)
It can't be...

WARRIOR #1
(weary)
Lord Emon...

Emon doesn't seem to have heard.

WARRIOR #1 (CONT'D)
*My Lord, we're tired. Maybe we
should rest.*

Emon stops. Turns to face the warrior.

LORD EMON
Tired?

Emon reaches to his satchel and pulls out DUST -- the
remains of more crumbled idols run through his fingers.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
*The boy has slain these Colossi on
his own. He has defied every mortal
law. He is winning...!*

He stops just inches from the nervous warrior.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
...and you claim that you are tired?

The warrior is too afraid to speak.

Then with great force Emon suddenly GRABS the warrior and
SHOVES HIS FACE into a puddle! The warrior flails. He
can't breathe. The others don't know what to do.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
Weak, insufferable fool!

Now the warrior's movements are jerky. Desperate. Emon
holds his face in the water until finally-

THE WARRIOR CEASES TO MOVE.

The others avert their eyes.

Emon releases his grip. Unapologetic. There's no time
for such little things. He returns to his horse.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
Only a little more to go.

EXT. DARK CAVE -- TWILIGHT

Agro limps out of the cave to the sound of HAMMERING. He looks around for his master.

Wander is kneeling on a rock a little ways off, lifting a stone high in the air and banging it down repeatedly. As Agro comes around him, we see-

HIS HORSESHOE

Being bent back into shape one blow at a time.

WANDER

Now, I wasn't much of a blacksmith,
but this'll have to do.

He holds up the horseshoe for Agro to see. Part of the shape is somewhat restored.

WANDER (CONT'D)

What do you think? Are we even?

Agro stares curiously. Wander picks up his mangled hoof and goes to work attaching the shoe.

WANDER (CONT'D)

You're a good friend, coming back.
I hope you know that.

He stands back to admire his handiwork.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Not bad for a runaway slave, huh?

Agro stomps his foot, trying out the new shoe. Wander staggers a bit, leaning on his friend for support.

WANDER (CONT'D)

You know what's strange? All my life I never believed in destiny. Maybe it was just the way people treated me-- I don't know. The way they used to look at me, tell me I'd never be anything but what I was, which was nothing. I knew they were wrong, but I couldn't prove it. I didn't know where I was going.

(a beat)

And now look at us. It's like every beating we ever took was getting us ready for this.

He turns to Agro, a rising glimmer in his eyes:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDER (CONT'D)
We're going to save her, Agro.
It's what we were born to do.

Agro gazes at him with great sympathy. Knowing just how badly his friend wants this.

Wander weakly reaches out and STROKES AGRO'S MANE. And for the first time, the horse does not resist.

EXT. STONE ARCH GORGE -- TWILIGHT

Wander and Agro trot through a sloped ravine.

The young man is fading in and out of a daze, but the horse continually shrugs to keep him awake.

LARGE CAIRNS

Are lining a windy path around a corner. Markers built by a civilization that has long since disappeared. They were meant to guide a traveler's way.

And so they follow, rounding the corner and descending into the heart of a deep valley, where they see-

EXT. CLOSED-OFF CITY -- TWILIGHT

It's a CITY. Or was, at least. Hundreds of moss-covered STONE RUINS spread throughout this protected valley.

Almost Aztec in design. The cube foundation blocks have long since crumbled. Canals that would normally carry rivers through the streets now only emit a trickle of water. Bridges have collapsed. Towers fallen sideways.

And yet through it all, a dense, beautiful GREEN. The moss and foliage have given this place a second life.

Wander dismounts gingerly, hobbling on weakened legs. He leads Agro through the empty streets.

WANDER
This must be where they lived.

He observes damage to the side of a bridge.

WIND BLOWS THROUGH THE RUINS. A reminder that this world may not be quite as empty as they thought.

They clear the buildings and approach-

A LARGE STAIRCASE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Leading up into the mountain range. It terminates at an ENORMOUS SET OF GATES. And right behind that set of gates-
IS THE DARK FORTRESS. They've arrived!

WANDER (CONT'D)
Agro, look! We made it!

But Agro's gaze is fixed on-

A STATUE OF A BULL

Perched on the steps in front of the gates. Stone-clad. Armored. Like a silent guardian.

And moving.

Ever so slightly. Just enough to indicate...

...it's ALIVE. This is CENOBIA.

The creature is not very big. A "Colossus" in name only. In fact, it's not even taller than Wander. Four stocky legs and stone armor wrapped around its furry body. But it's nothing compared to the Colossi we've encountered.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Not much of a giant, is it?

Cenobia shakes itself off. Dust and ash fall from its stone-clad shoulders. It growls slightly.

Agro is poised. Wary.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Hey, don't be afraid-

And then Cenobia bounds down the stairs, gaining speed...

...HEADING STRAIGHT TOWARDS WANDER!

He barely has time to draw his sword before Cenobia bucks right into him and THROWS HIM ASIDE!

Wander slides into the canal. Pulls himself to his feet and shakes off.

Cenobia looms on the edge of the street above, ROARING down. This creature might be small, but it's got a heart more ferocious than any of the Colossi we've yet seen.

Agro tries to approach, but Wander waves him off.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Wait. Stay away!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He sprints through the shallow water of the canal, trying to lead Cenobia away. The creature follows.

They reach the far end. Wander climbs up the wall back to street level -- opposite Cenobia. Now they're separated by the canal. The creature roars furiously.

WANDER (CONT'D)

That should give you some time to
calm down-

But without hesitating, Cenobia JUMPS ACROSS THE DIVIDE!

WANDER (CONT'D)

Oh come on!

Wander limps away as fast as he can when-

AGRO SWOOPS IN!

Wander pulls himself into the saddle, relying on the horse's majestic speed to outrun this creature. They dart in and out of the structures, trying to keep away.

Cenobia is relentless, charging alongside them. Wander tries stabbing it with his sword, but the stone armor is too thick. There's no way he can get to the fur beneath.

Sensing the futility, he leads Agro towards-

A GIANT COLUMN

Standing alone like a pylon reaching for the sky. Just as they reach it, Wander JUMPS OFF, climbing his way up its ridges while Cenobia-

BARRELS INTO THE SIDE!

Stones crumble. The structure buckles, but holds.

The creature grows frustrated, running quick circles, scratching at the column like a cat on a post. It BARKS an aggressive war cry. Come down and fight.

Wander rests at the top, twenty feet off the ground. Trying to figure out his next move.

So Cenobia figures it out for him.

The Colossus rams the column at full velocity and causes it to TOPPLE!

WANDER (CONT'D)

No, no-

The entire structure, Wander and all, CRASHES into-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A STONE ARCHWAY

Supporting what was once a large building. The entire wall crumbles with it, like a chain reaction of stones crashing in every direction.

The young man lands hard in a pile of rubble. He holds his hands over his head, trying to shield himself.

Cenobia tries furiously to get to him. More columns are now buckling and falling. Stone pieces pounding the Colossus's thick frame and-

BURYING IT INSIDE! A long silence passes.

Agro runs towards the edge of the ruins, concerned, watching as dust rises. And after a moment...

Wander rises, too. Bruised up, but all right. Amidst the ruins, no sign of movement. Cenobia is buried.

The young man smiles weakly at his horse just as-

THE STONES BEHIND HIM SHIFT.

CENOBIA

Rises like the ugliest phoenix you'll ever see. Still standing, still angry. Just like Wander -- it never stops. Only difference this time is all of its armor seems to have broken off, leaving its naked furry frame exposed.

WANDER (CONT'D)

You've got to be kidding me.

The creature begins to charge. Wander is too exhausted to get out of the way. Instead, he ducks left and-

GRABS ONTO A PATCH OF FUR

As it runs past. He's hitching a ride!

Cenobia barks and reroutes his path, but the young man has had experience with wild creatures like this before. He holds on with steadfast determination.

They go on a furious run through the streets, slamming into walls, tearing apart the ancient city in their wake.

Then Agro darts into the creature's path and causes it to lose its balance-

ROLLING OVER ON ITS BACK. Wander goes down with it.

The young man and the Colossus are wrestling together in a desperate scrum.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cenobia is trying to crush its adversary, whereas Wander is trying to both stop himself from being trampled and find an angle to finish it off.

Agro runs in tight circles, furiously looking for any means by which he can help his friend -- frustrated that there's nothing.

Their faces are inches away. Wander can feel the creature's hot breath. He can hear its monstrous growling.

He locks eyes with Cenobia. Its hooves dig into him. Limiting his ability to breathe. There's a palpable fear that either could come out the victor in this battle until-

SUDDENLY THE CREATURE SCREAMS OUT!

A sickening, awful cry. Unbecoming of the monster it is. It stiffens and falls back, revealing for us to see-

WANDER'S SWORD plunged through its gut.

The young man stands, withdraws the blade. He's won, but he's not celebrating. Too close to death for jubilation.

Cenobia is helpless, immobilized. It knows it has been bested. Death is only a matter of one more stroke.

Wander holds the blade. He knows what he must now do.

He raises the sword and DELIVERS THE KILLING BLOW.

Cenobia's eyes grow dim. Dead. But this doesn't feel like a victory. It feels like a slaughter.

Agro comes up next to him. Wander can feel his gaze.

WANDER (CONT'D)

What else was I supposed to do?

Agro doesn't respond.

Moments later DARK TENDRILS emerge and STAB THROUGH WANDER.

He falls backwards like a rag doll. Agro stabilizes him. PAIN courses through him like a strike of lightning...

...and then ceases.

Wander opens his eyes. Something's changing in him. It's like the pain was a reminder of his purpose. And now he's feeling no regret. His body is like a hollow shell of suffering. Focused straight ahead at-

THE DARK FORTRESS. Nothing stands in their way now.

EXT. GATEWAY -- TWILIGHT

A somber march up the stairs towards the fortress.

Wander is determined. A warrior on the verge of fulfilling his destiny. This is what he was born to do.

There is a seal before the massive gates. Light pours through a circular porthole in the middle.

AND THE SWORD GLOWS.

Wander heroically raises it to the light as-

THE SEAL DRAWS OPEN

Like a path opening up before them...

EXT. DEEP CHASM -- TWILIGHT

Leading to a RAVINE dropping hundreds of feet into a river. A STONE BRIDGE stretches across it. Their only way.

Wander leads Agro forward. But as they take a first step-

A STONE IMMEDIATELY BREAKS LOOSE and falls.

The bridge is unstable. The horse backs off. The loosened piece causes a chain reaction of crumbling rock, plummeting into the ravine one after another and-

CREATING A GAP

That prevents them from reaching the rest of the bridge!

Wander climbs out of the saddle. Shocked...

WANDER

No...

He looks up and down the ravine. There's no other way across. This bridge was their only way.

WANDER (CONT'D)

What is this?!

Agro doesn't know what to think either. The young man and his horse just stand there, dumbstruck.

Has their journey really come to an end right now?

A NOISE BEHIND THEM.

In the distance, the clattering of HOOVES. Voices yelling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Wander turns back, with rising dread, towards-

EXT. CLOSED-OFF CITY -- TWILIGHT

The city. Where Lord Emon and his men are riding quickly past the cairns. They've caught up!

EXT. DEEP CHASM -- TWILIGHT

Wander instinctively goes for his sword.

WANDER
This isn't how it was supposed to
be...

Agro turns his eyes back to the bridge. Trying to think of what to do. They're stuck.

Wander climbs into the saddle and leads him back down the path. Counting the number of warriors coming in. Five.

IT'S LORD EMON IN THE LEAD.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Agro, it can't end like this...

But Agro's not paying attention. He's more focused on the path ahead... and the GAP before the rickety bridge. He's counting steps. Formulating.

Then, without warning, suddenly-

HE TAKES OFF

Sprinting towards the bridge with Wander on his back. Barreling at full speed. Wander doesn't know what's happening. He clings to the reins, unable to protest as-

AGRO LEAPS COURAGEOUSLY

Across the gap! Barely landing the jump, then sprinting along the shaking bridge. It's beginning to tremble.

WANDER (CONT'D)
Hurry, Agro!

Behind them, STONES begin to fall. It's coming apart. The section they've crossed has all but collapsed.

Agro's determination is incredible. His eyes are focused on the other side. Dead set ahead. All of his strength, everything he has left...

They're about to make it...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

UNTIL THE VERY END

When the last platform suddenly-

BUCKLES BACKWARDS!

Agro flails back on his hind legs.

And knows what must be done...

HE BUCKS WANDER OVER HIS HEAD

Safely onto the opposite ledge. Wander lands forcefully on his back. He rolls over.

WANDER (CONT'D)

No, wait-

They only have time for one last look between each other before the last piece of the bridge SNAPS LOOSE and-

THE HORSE PLUMMETS INTO THE RAVINE!

WANDER (CONT'D)

AGRO!!!

Wander's face is PURE HORROR. His hand is outstretched. Almost to the point of falling in himself.

The horse fades to a small dot and vanishes.

Agro is gone.

Wander SCREAMS OUT, face contorted in an expression of outrage. Tears flow to his eyes. He bangs at the earth, unable to reconcile what has just happened.

And finally he lowers his head. Sobbing hysterically. Tears streaming down his cheeks.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Why did you do that... you stupid horse...

His friend is dead. All is lost.

RAIN COMES DOWN. One small drop, mixing with his tears. Then another. And another.

A DEEP BLACK CLOUD

Looms above. The twilight has disappeared. Instead the sky is now a deep, pale obsidian.

For a long beat, Wander just lies there as the heavens pour down. Unable to bear this burden alone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Until he realizes that...

THE FIVE HORSEMEN

Have arrived on the opposite embankment. Stopped where the bridge once was. Unable to cross.

The warriors draw CROSSBOWS, ready to fire, but-

LORD EMON (subtitled)

Wait.

Lord Emon climbs down off his horse. Holding out a hand, as if to calm everyone. Turns to Wander, across the way.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

Listen to me. It doesn't have to be this way!

Wander rises, unspeaking. Starts to back away.

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

You are meddling with things you cannot begin to understand! Do you hear me, you cursed boy?! You cannot save her!

And off that line Wander TURNS. All his hurt -- a reaction against this cruel world -- finally funneling into RAGE.

WANDER

Watch me.

He turns towards the cliff leading up to the DARK FORTRESS.

The place where his journey will end.

It's time to fulfill his destiny.

He begins to scale the cliff.

Across the ravine, the warriors UNLEASH THEIR ARROWS, but they cannot reach him at this distance.

Emon returns hastily to his horse. Steers it back.

LORD EMON

We have one last chance.

EXT. DARK FORTRESS -- NIGHT

The rain POURS DOWN as Wander scales the cliff.

Lightning flashes. It doesn't deter him. He's focused on his purpose. Feels no pain anymore. Only rage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Finally he pulls himself over the ledge and beholds-

THE TOWERING FORTRESS

A black, winding spire. Platforms, pediments, freezes, windows, all wrapped around in an ornate, char-colored style. This is not a welcoming place.

Wander plants his feet firmly at the base of the stairs. He yells towards the tower, above the din of thunder:

WANDER
I've come for you, do you hear
me?! SHOW YOURSELF!

But nothing emerges from the fortress. Wander looks around incredulously. Where could it be...?

A GROANING NOISE

Spreads around him. Deep and resonating. Like the foundations of a building shuddering to life. In fact, that's exactly what it is. Joists and beams are trembling. Stones sliding upon stones. Is it an earthquake, or...

THE FORTRESS. It's moving. Beginning to grow.

Because the final Colossus is not inside this fortress. It is the fortress.

TWO ARMS

Snap loose from the sides of the structure. Long, spindly fingers, examining themselves for the first time in centuries. From the top stretches a neck and-

A HEAD. Dark and scarred. Two glowing eyes staring down at this young man -- this grain of sand.

There's no comparison for this Colossus. It's tall enough that you could cram it with all the other creatures we've met thus far and still have room to spare. It doesn't roar. It doesn't move quickly. It is patient. Deadly. And still. Its name is MALUS.

The left hand slowly lifts, for a moment seeming to offer a profound gesture of peace...

...until the hand begins to GLOW.

Wander has seen this before -- from the eyes of Basaran. And he knows what's coming next. He begins to retreat down the steps just as the hand-

SPITS OUT AN ELECTRIC BOLT!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It chops at his feet, not a direct hit but enough to pick him up and KNOCK HIM DOWN THE STAIRS...

ROLLING

Head over heels, hitting every step on the way down, sliding in the wet rain, towards the edge...

WHERE HE GRABS ONTO A STONE

Catching himself and the sword before he goes over the cliff! Yelling out in fear.

Pulling himself back over the ledge.

And glaring at his adversary. The moment is reminiscent of when he faced Valus, the first Colossus.

So instead of retreating...

HE RUNS FORWARD.

The Colossus FIRES another bolt.

Wander reaches the top of the stairs just in time to see an OPENING IN THE GROUND. He leaps for it, the electricity striking the dirt next to him, exploding, and-

THROWING HIM VIOLENTLY INTO THE PASSAGE!

He hits the wall and drops to the stone surface. This time he doesn't cry out in pain. He's beyond that.

He picks himself up and looks around.

He's in some kind of underground corridor. It seems to lead beneath the tower. He creeps through it. Winding its way beneath the the rotating stones.

We can see its glowing entrails -- SIZZLING EMBER that groans as it fuels a magical energy to this structure.

The passage spits him out BEHIND THE TOWER, where the platform ends on-

A CLIFF FACE.

Raging water smashes the rocks below. Wander has no choice but to move-

UP. Hand over hand, climbing the base of the tower behind Malus's penetrating gaze.

The Colossus doesn't see him. It GROANS in frustration. When it does, the foundations of the building QUAKE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN AND WIND

Push at him as if trying to hold him back. Wander can barely look up, it's coming down so hard. He puts a hand on a frieze above but it slips off. He has to prop himself with his legs to get enough friction.

Now the tower rotates like a layer cake with many gears. Wander times his jumps, climbing from one platform to the next as they move around him.

He reaches the top of the platform, hiding behind the point where Malus's furry back connects with the stone.

Beyond it, he can see the full expanse of the Forbidden Land. The full distance he's traveled.

Wander finds an exposed area along the Colossus's back and angrily STABS IT.

Malus ROARS OUT as if stung by a bee.

Wander's too smart to think this would hurt it. No... he's just trying to get its attention. The creature reaches with its left hand. He boldly leaps backwards-

AND GRABS ONTO ITS FINGER!

Dangling from one of the long, spindly nails. The creature detects him and brings him around to look.

Wander dangles in the path of its gaze. Just like he did with Barba. Only this time he had anticipated this too. He rights himself on the palm of its hand-

AND RUNS UP ITS ARM

While Malus tries to swat at him with its other hand.

Wander pulls himself over the stone armor -- onto a patch of fur on its shoulder. The ancient sword GLOWS. Its light tendrils draw their way up Malus's shoulder and point him towards the top of its head.

WANDER (CONT'D)

Got you now, you bastard.

He starts to climb up its neck when Malus suddenly-

SMASHES DOWN ON HIM!

Using its other hand to smother Wander into its fur -- bones breaking. Wander screams out. But he's accepted that pain is a sustainable loss in this fight. He doesn't care anymore. He defensively-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIFTS THE SWORD

So that it plunges into the creature's hand.

Only then does Malus relent, leaving Wander immobile on its furry shoulder. He tries to pull himself to his feet but can't. His leg is broken. Tears roll down his cheeks.

And yet he's still determined.

WANDER (CONT'D)
IS THAT THE BEST YOU'VE GOT?!

He drags himself, hand over hand...

UP MALUS'S NECK.

TOWARDS THE SIGIL glowing from the sword's light on top of the creature's head.

Malus knows Wander is close. It arcs its neck and begins shaking furiously. Trying to throw him off. Wander holds on with weakening fingers, trying to get enough position to raise his sword.

HIS FINGERS

Slipping on the wet stone.

ON WANDER'S EYES: rage, the intensity of a young man who's lost everything he ever loved, and who's determined never to lose anything ever again...

--FLASHING TO--

MONO ON THE PEDESTAL, sitting up, beautiful eyes opening like roses. Frightened for him...

BACK TO WANDER

Funneling his anger into the kill. Raw and vengeful.

Using every last bit of strength to climb back up, lifting the blade high in the air and-

PLUNGING IT INTO THE CREATURE'S HEAD!

Malus utters a horrific DEATH GASP.

BLACK BLOOD

Sprays like a geyser from the wound -- so much that it literally picks Wander up and-

THROWS HIM THROUGH THE AIR!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Time slows down.

There's a brief instant where the young man realizes what's happened. The price of his victory. Because he's-

FALLING

A thousand feet. He can't feel the rain. Can't feel the wind. Can't feel anything anymore.

The tower begins to TOPPLE. The whole thing is coming down around him. But Wander is at peace. Accepting what's about to happen. Knowing this is the price he would pay. He turns to the rising ground...

CLOSES HIS EYES and we-

DISSOLVE TO:

A BRIGHT SUN

Something we haven't seen in a long time.

EXT. DARK FORTRESS -- DAY

A significant amount of time has passed.

It's daytime. No more rain. Or twilight. The clouds have parted to reveal a bright, shiny summer afternoon.

For just a second we'd think we were in paradise, but-

WE PAN DOWN

To reveal Malus's corpse, dead on its base. We're right where we left off. Its arms are spread in a limp pose. It looks like the scene of a crime.

And as we continue to PAN DOWN...

...we reach WANDER. Motionless amidst the rubble. His body is curled up. Peaceful.

UNTIL IT LIFTS UP

As if being carried by invisible tendrils, rising heroically -- majestically -- through the air, drifting towards the bright, shining light as we CUT TO-

INT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP -- DAY

WANDER OPENING HIS EYES.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He's lying on the cold stone floor of the Shrine. Is he in a dream? How did he get here?

A RINGING NOISE

The ANCIENT SWORD is cart-wheeling through the rotunda, as if dropped from the sky, spinning blade over handle and lodging in the stone just a few feet away.

Wander begins to rise, and realizes... no. This is real. He's been transported back to the Shrine of Worship!

Then he feels the weight of his injuries. His leg is still broken. Cuts and bruises cover his body. Blood is dripping from both of his temples.

He turns his gaze towards THE PEDESTAL where Mono's body lies. Excitement rises...

WANDER

Mono!

He begins staggering towards her when suddenly-

AN ARROW

Lodges in his thigh. Wander screams and hits the ground.

AHEAD: from behind the pillars-

LORD EMON AND HIS WARRIORS emerge one by one. They've come back and have been waiting for him. Their crossbows are drawn. They block his path to the pedestal.

But even with an arrow in his thigh, Wander continues limping down the aisle. Eyes focused on Mono.

LORD EMON (subtitled)

(to his men)

*What are you waiting for? Eradicate
the source of evil!*

Another warrior aims and FIRES!

Another arrow lodges in Wander's hip. He hits the ground but keeps crawling towards Mono. All he wants is her.

MORE ARROWS are fired. Wander is losing strength. But he's still coming. The persistence of this young man.

Lord Emon watches with fascinated horror as Wander makes it up the stairs, inching past his feet and reaching for Mono's pedestal with weak fingers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
Extraordinary. Even now you can't
bring yourself to stop.

WANDER
Get out of my way-

But Wander stumbles, collapses. ROLLS ONTO HIS BACK.

LORD EMON
I underestimated you. You were
stronger than I ever imagined.

Wander is focused on the LIGHT of the rotunda. The place
from which Dormin first spoke to him. Silent now.

WANDER
(labored breaths)
I did it. I saved her...

Emon can't believe his persistence. And in that look he
finally begins to realize...

LORD EMON
You didn't know. You poor, wretched
thing. You didn't know this demon's
true nature. All that you've
done... and all you did was put
our world in danger.

Wander looks at him, incredulous. Emon kneels, anger
turning to sorrow as he says:

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
You were being used.

He turns to the rest of his men. No joy in this decision:

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
*Put him out of his misery. There
is no other choice. His cursed
fate must end here.*

The chief warrior unsheathes his sword and steps forward.

Wander stares up at the blade as it raises over him.
He's still trying to understand the mistake he's made
when the chief warrior-

STABS HIM THROUGH THE CHEST!

Wander convulses. His hands grasp the blade.

And then he goes still. Dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

For a moment, all is silent. Emon watches, steadfast, as if assuring himself that the job is done.

Until...

WARRIOR
Lord Emon! Look!

A FLASH OF LIGHT

Rises from the eight idols lining the Shrine. On all sides, they suddenly-

EXPLODE INTO RUBBLE!

The warriors in the aisle are tossed backwards by the debris. Emon shields his eyes. And in their wake-

EIGHT SHADOW CREATURES

Appear in the nave. Staggering toward Wander's body. Looming around him as if in worship of their master.

Who is miraculously coming back to life.

Wander opens his eyes. He sees the sword plunged through his gut. Instinctively reaches for the blade...

...AND PULLS IT OUT.

When he does, BLACK BLOOD pours from the wound.

WANDER
What's happening to me...?

The black blood TRANSFORMS into BLACK SMOKE TENDRILS. The young man looks at Lord Emon, as if pleading for help.

But Emon is afraid too. He backs against the pedestal.

LORD EMON
We were too late.

The smoke tendrils PLUNGE relentlessly in and out of Wander's body. All of his injuries -- everything he's sustained throughout our story -- coursing with ENERGY.

He looks down at his hands...

...AS THEY TURN INTO CLAWS!

--FLASHES TO--

The glyphs on the walls, the image of the HORNED DEMON.

The words etched as a desperate plea:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GO BACK

Now back to-

WANDER, terrified. A change is happening to him.

WANDER

Help me... please...

His eyes are turning BLACK. He's starting not to look like a young man anymore, nor even a warrior.

--MORE FLASHES--

To the glyphs we saw earlier. The horned demon towering over armies. Destroying cities. Running amuck.

Emon's words playing through his head on a cyclical loop...

LORD EMON'S VOICE (V.O.)

You poor, wretched thing. You
didn't know this demon's true
nature...

WANDER'S EYES WIDEN IN AWFUL REALIZATION...

WANDER

No...

He reaches to his bleeding temples, and now we see why...

Because horns are beginning to sprout.

Growing from his head while the BLACK TENDRILS swallow his face. No longer Wander now. No longer a man.

THUNDER

Reverberates through the rotunda. Or actually, no, it's not thunder. It's something more sinister...

LAUGHTER. Deep and bellowing.

Dormin's laughter.

The shadow creatures PLUNGE INTO WANDER'S TRANSFORMING BODY. He begins to GROW IN MASS, larger and larger. Each of these eight components is now using him as a vessel -- transforming into a larger shape.

What was once Wander has become a CREATURE. Shadowed and gigantic, towering over the warriors' heads...

A MONSTROUS HORNED DEMON.

Or, as we should have known from the very beginning...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DORMIN.

[NOTE: Wander has now become this reconstituted monster, so we will refer to him as...]

DORMIN

Did you think you could keep us here forever?!

LORD EMON

The monster has been resurrected!

DORMIN

You severed our body into eight parts! Trapped us for an eternity in order to seal away our power!

Dormin slams a MASSIVE CLAW into the ground.

DORMIN (CONT'D)

Now, we, Dormin have risen anew!

Emon yells to the other warriors.

LORD EMON

Place a seal over the entire shrine before it's too late!

One of the warriors runs for the ANCIENT SWORD, but Dormin sweeps a fist into him, throwing him a hundred feet.

DORMIN

No! You've kept us here too long already!

Another warrior raises a crossbow, but Dormin PLUCKS HIM UP and CRUSHES HIM with massive claws. Savoring it.

DORMIN (CONT'D)

How I've missed this kind of joy.

He bears down on Lord Emon, retreated against the pedestal.

DORMIN (CONT'D)

Your people will not stop us again. Now begins a new age. The age of the end of man...

--FLASH TO--

The GLYPH of the demon standing over the single warrior. We now see this warrior was LORD EMON. We're beginning to realize those glyphs were not a history, but a prophecy.

Emon closes his eyes. Preparing for death.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORD EMON

(praying)
*Forgive us, our gods... the boy
 did not know...*

Dormin raises his fist. And just as he does he sees MONO, still lying dead on the pedestal just over Emon's shoulder.

We suddenly-

ZOOM INTO DORMIN'S EYES

Through the recesses of black smoke, through the haze and thundering ether to-

EXT. OPEN LANDSCAPE -- NIGHT --- **FLASHBACK**

WANDER, defeated and lost. Sitting on the riverbank just like before, next to Mono, who turns to him hopefully...

MONO

You think it is possible to choose
 our own fate?

SLAM BACK TO-

INT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP -- **THE PRESENT**

THE EYES OF WANDER

Snapping open, as if suddenly coming awake inside of this creature. Remembering her words and-

SCREAMING OUT! It doesn't have to be this way!

Dormin PULLS BACK-

Stumbling into the aisle, body gyrating. It's as if for a moment he has lost control of this body.

Lord Emon regards this in sheer wonderment.

There is a war occurring inside of this demon. A battle for control for this vessel. Dormin tries to come back again, but something is fighting him. He convulses and struggles. A mass of shadows swirling about themselves...

Wander is taking control!

The chief warrior helps Lord Emon to his feet.

CHIEF WARRIOR

We have to leave!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dormin slams backwards into the wall. Stones topple around him. He's roaring out, writhing against himself, grabbing at his own head, SCREAMING, and finally-

GOING STILL.

Dropping to the floor, just a limp, breathing shadow. Like a wild dog that's been restrained.

Emon looks back down the aisle.

As the demon -- now the young man inside -- realizes what he must do to save this world. He looks at Emon. Spreading his arms in a self-sacrificial pose.

THE ANCIENT SWORD -- still planted in the nave -- SHINES OUT and illuminates a GLOWING SIGIL over his heart.

Lord Emon understands what he's telling him to do. He limps towards the sword. Picks it up reverently, and-

TOSSES IT THROUGH THE AIR!

The blade cart-wheels and LANDS IN THE DEMON'S CHEST.

It's like popping a balloon. Shadows pour out from the wound. The pillars around them begin to shake.

WIND PICKS UP.

The Shrine begins to come apart.

The demon turns his dark eyes to Mono. A sad, final look. WANDER INSIDE, knowing he will never be with her again...

Emon, watching him. Sympathy for the young man's sacrifice.

Then the chief warrior runs in and drags Lord Emon out.

INT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP - ENTRANCE -- DAY

Running up the ramp to the entrance.

Lord Emon stares down at the ritual cleansing pool below.

The wind is swirling around it like a vortex, beginning to SUCK objects into the water.

THE ANCIENT SWORD

Spins from the nave and lands inside. And when it does-

A BRIGHT BURST OF LIGHT

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Spreads outwards, throwing Emon back. The chief warrior drags him out the door with the other last survivor.

INT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP -- DAY

THE BURST OF LIGHT

Picks up like a gust of wind and pulls THE DEMON'S LIMP CORPSE into the whirling vortex of the pool.

Now the shadow creatures begin to peel away, sucked back into the light, the demon's mass decreasing in size, less and less, until finally all that is left-

IS WANDER'S BODY

Tumbling through the air, dead... he sacrificed his life to undo his mistake...

As the LIGHT of the cleansing pool SWALLOWS HIM and we-

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP -- DAY

Lord Emon and his warriors riding furiously away on the long span of bridge. As they move-

BURSTS OF LIGHT

Begin to pull away the arches, causing it to fall behind them. Emon urges his horse onwards.

They stay just ahead of the falling structure.

When they reach the gates they stop to look back. The last bit of bridge falls behind them, sealing off the Shrine -- and the Forbidden Land -- forever.

CHIEF WARRIOR (subtitled)

He was truly cursed.

Emon looks out over the sacred land with a hint of regret. Wander's actions have shaken him to his core.

LORD EMON

No. He chose his own fate, and he saved us all.

He kneels and whispers:

LORD EMON (CONT'D)

Poor ungodly soul.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORD EMON (CONT'D)
*If it is even possible to exist in
 these sealed lands... I hope the
 next life can bring you peace.*

EXT. FORBIDDEN LAND -- DAY

AS WE PAN OUT OVER THE KINGDOM

Sun-drenched and empty.

EIGHT SPIRES OF LIGHT stretching from eight points,
 connecting the earth to the heavens.

We pass from one place to another.

A soft, reflective moment regarding...

THE BODIES OF THE FALLEN COLOSSI.

Valus, Basaran, Barba, Avion, Hydrus, Pelagia, Cenobia,
 and finally Malus, lying on its base.

All of them resemble crumbled stone ruins. Sad and
 abandoned. We no longer see them as fallen monsters.
 They are the murdered, misunderstood guardians of a seal
 that should have never been broken.

Their bodies are memorials to a world that will now forever
 remain untouched.

INT. SHRINE OF WORSHIP -- DAY

Birds chirp on the colonnade landing.

Beyond this, DESTRUCTION in the aftermath of Dormin's
 attack. The Shrine has been torn apart. The idols are
 crushed. Bodies of fallen warriors splayed out nearby.

AND MONO still lying on the pedestal. Motionless.

UNTIL SHE SITS UP

Slowly at first, then with increasing awareness of her
 surroundings. She steps off the pedestal, looking around
 at the what has befallen this place.

Like the aftermath of a battle.

FOOTSTEPS behind her. HOOVES. She turns to see an
 injured, limping-

AGRO! The horse has somehow survived.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHE CARESSES HIS MANE.

Agro allows her to do it. Reveling in her affection.

Mono pulls him closer, embracing this "demon spirit" who has done so much for her. Finally understanding what a courageous heart this horse truly has.

Then they both look around sadly. Because SOMEONE IS MISSING. A moment to acknowledge their shared loss.

Until they hear SOUNDS OF CRYING.

Remote, curious. Seemingly coming from the other side of the Shrine... it sounds like a BABY.

Mono and Agro walk curiously towards the ritual cleansing pool. The place where Wander disappeared. The water has run dry. Nothing remains, except at the base of the well-

A SMALL BABY BOY

Is naked and shivering. For a moment we might be alarmed, until on this baby's face we recognize something familiar. An unmistakable, charismatic glimmer...

There's a hint of Wander.

Reincarnated in hope for a new life. But with TWO TINY SCARS ON HIS TEMPLES -- reminders of the sins of his past.

Mono takes the baby into her arms.

Behind her, Agro limps up the ramp.

They ascend together, Mono calming this curious baby as they pass through an archway leading around the entrance...

EXT. SECRET GARDEN -- DAY

Into a lush, green GARDEN set atop the Shrine.

High stone pillars protect them from the wind. Water flows from the walls on all sides, nurturing the green grass and the fruit and vegetable plants all around.

BIRDS CHIRP. Fawn and small lizards scamper about. Life has returned to this place. Or maybe it was always there.

As Mono stands in this paradise, holding the cooing baby with Agro at her side, we realize...

It's the same image from Wander's dream.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She sees this too, and smiles. Because in the end, he gave her the destiny he had dreamt.

Doves flutter at her feet. Then, as they take off-

WE TRACK WITH A SINGLE BIRD

THE HAWK

The same one from the beginning of our story. Our heroic host. The embodiment of freedom. Flapping its wings.

Once.

Twice.

Three times.

Carrying us high above the garden, above the Shrine, above even the highest reaches of the Forbidden Land...

Free to choose its destiny.

As it soars into the sun's warm embrace we-

FADE OUT.

* * * THE END * * *