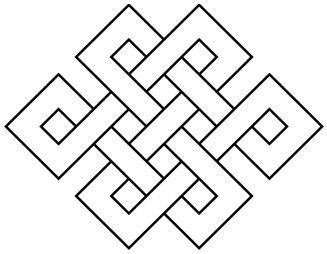

GIVE ME BACK MY BODY FROM THE ETERNAL KNOT OF INFINITY

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INT. THE PRINCE'S CABIN - TWILIGHT

The insides are modest, but warm.

Gadgets and trinkets from across an ancient world sit on the large desk in the center of the room.

Many finished and unfinished paintings in a corner, the last set upon the easel, ripped.

PRINCE MENELIK (20s), quiet, well-built, wipes the tears from his eyes near the edge of his bed.

He sets down a letter. Inscribed on the front, in Amharic: "To my son"

He composes himself and grabs his robes.

Before leaving, he glances at a golden crown interwoven with red, yellow, and green gemstones sitting on his bedrest.

EXT. THE PRINCE'S CABIN - TWILIGHT

A small house near the ocean. Light snowfall touches expansive farmland.

There's no other house for miles.

The Prince begins his journey down a dirt path leading into the dauntless mountains ahead.

EXT. THE KINGDOM OF SABA - DAWN

SUPER: THE KINGDOM OF SABA. 918 B.C.

Prince Menelik reaches the highest path on the snow-tipped mountain.

Through the clouds, in the valley below, we lay witness to The Kingdom of Saba.

This is Prince Menelik's homeland. His pride and joy.

If one could quantify the idea of The Garden of Eden still existing in a majestic kingdom tucked away in a land untouched by death, starvation, famine, and war.

A great land protected by vast mountains from all sides except the warm glow of a bountiful sea.

Rivers flow plentiful. Small ships flow through to the greater waters.

Monuments dot the expanse as tributes to great dignitaries of the past built from gold, bronze, or obsidian.

The entire kingdom revolves around its palace, a great black pyramid at its center.

INT. THE STREETS OF SABA - MORNING

The market is quiet, save a few VENDORS putting out their wares.

Prince Menelik walks through the streets, the CITIZENS whisper.

They speak in the Central Cushitic language, Awngi, SUBTITLED:

REVERENT CITIZEN
Prince.

THANKFUL CITIZEN
Thank you.

MOURNFUL CITIZEN
Hero.

A YOUNG BOY darts out of an alleyway, slamming into the Prince.

The apple in his hand rolls into the mud.

The boy hurries over to the apple, desperately wiping it off.

Prince Menelik frowns. He walks over to a bundle of shops. He takes a bag and fills it with apples; sets down a gold coin.

He turns to the next kiosk and picks up a robe.

The Prince inspects it. Good.

He reaches inside his own robes and sets his crown on the table.

ROBE VENDOR
My Prince, I cannot.

Prince Menelik turns away. He places the bag full of apples and a new robe beside the young boy before continuing towards The Black Pyramid.

EXT. THE BLACK PYRAMID - DAY

Prince Menelik ascends the great steps to greet QUEEN SHEBA, 50s, eternally regal & composed.

PRINCE MENELIK
Queen Sheba.

QUEEN SHEBA
Your crown?

PRINCE MENELIK
Given to a greater purpose.

Queen and Prince enter.

INT. THE BLACK PYRAMID - CONTINUOUS

The Queen & Prince survey the plentiful harvest from the grand heights of the palace hall.

Citizens cultivate fruits, vegetables, and wheat beneath.

PRINCE MENELIK
I'm honored the gods have chosen me.

QUEEN SHEBA
It shouldn't be you.

PRINCE MENELIK
We prosper in their foresight.

QUEEN SHEBA
They're going to kill you.

PRINCE MENELIK
The sacred pilgrimage promises exit.

QUEEN SHEBA
Tell me. Who in our history has returned? The people love their prince. You are their leader, their warrior, and their champion. No one would question a change in order through blood.

PRINCE MENELIK
Mother!

Queen Sheba holds her head up; unbothered by her bluntness.

PRINCE MENELIK (CONT'D)
Another century of prosperity for but one prince. The gods revel in their correct nature. The choice has been made. I would not deny our people bounty.

The Prince looks over the vast land; muses.

PRINCE MENELIK (CONT'D)
Father would send me many letters telling me of those chosen by divine duty; that our hearts must yearn for the citizen, the ailing mother, the destitute father, the silent child. Anyone who dares the hubris of believing they can guide men, should not be afraid to lead in example.

The Queen takes her son's shaking hands.

PRINCE MENELIK (CONT'D)
Will father be there?

QUEEN SHEBA
No.

The Prince looks away.

EXT. ALTAR OF FLOWERS - DAY

Atop the great black pyramid, on its golden peak, a garden.

Plants and flowers from across the world bloom inside this sacred space.

The Prince, his mother with him, and a grand group of citizens following, walk up the black steps leading out of the Black Pyramid's interior into the garden.

Prince Menelik unrobes till his chest is bare.

He sits in prayer on a raised altar; obsidian stone sculpted into a terrifying shape, hands interlocked forearm to forearm creating an interwoven, diamond-shaped web.

An Eternal Knot of Infinity.

Citizens stand outside the altar, waiting.

PRINCE MENELIK
I am Prince Menelik of Saba. Heir of the shining sun, Makeda. Progeny of the philosopher king, Jedidiah. For my queen and for my people, I accept the god's offer to enter the great festival, the Eternal Knot of Infinity. With my sacrifice, may our great kingdom stand for another century in peace and prosperity.

Queen Sheba leads the Young Boy that Prince Menelik met earlier to the altar.

The Young Boy and Prince Menelik share a smile. The Young Boy bows.

Then, he places a hand on Prince Menelik's body, leaving a green handprint on the Prince's body.

The Young Boy stands back. Queen Sheba embraces her son.

QUEEN SHEBA
Return to your kingdom. Return to me.

She leaves a red handprint on his cheek. The next citizen bows then places a yellow handprint on his body.

MONTAGE BEGINS:

Citizens from across the kingdom greet their prince.

All bow. All lay hands on him.

Some cry.

Some pray.

Some hug.

Some simply hold his hand in thanks.

At all times, Prince Menelik smiles. Thankful.

MONTAGE ENDS:

<u>EXT. THE ALTAR OF FLOWERS - SUNSET</u>

The citizens of the kingdom stand in an ever growing circle of rings around the altar.

Prince Menelik's body is a canvas of red, yellow, and green.

CRUNCH! CRUNCH! CRUNCH!

Dense footsteps fill the air.

Prince Menelik’s gaze rises from a state of meditation.

THE SEVEN, gods of the approaching festival, walk from every direction towards the altar.

Their faces obscured by white cloth hanging from their crowns.

Their bodies free & unencumbered by garb, dress, or robe.

The smallest stands over seven foot. Each of them are giants in comparison to Prince Menelik and his people.

The Prince gets on his knees and bows before The Seven.

The people of Saba all bow.

The Seven wait till everyone’s heads are down.

ONE, missing their left breast, grabs Prince Menelik by his neck.

They pull out a CEREMONIAL BLADE, the sacred weapon for the oncoming festival.

CLOSE ON: The Eternal Knot of Infinity emblazoned on the blade’s hilt.

One carves The Eternal Knot into Prince Menelik’s skin. His screams are muffled by One’s massive hands.

All citizens keep their head bowed. The Young Boy winces with every scream. He looks over to see Queen Sheba gritting her teeth, in mournful silence.

One lets go of their grip. The Prince falls to the ground. Coughs.

Throws up from the pain.

One grabs the Prince by the head and carves scars into his neck.

This time, the crowd can hear the Prince straining not to cry out.

One finishes a final, tenth scar. The Seven tap their staffs in unison. An ethereal HUM rings through the air.

One releases Prince Menelik from his grip.

In quick succession, The Seven rush to the Prince’s body, tearing into his flesh and bone.

One rips out Prince Menelik’s eyes.

TWO, a hefty man missing his left arm, tears off his nose.

THREE, stoma cut into his neck to breathe, grabs the Prince’s left forearm and twists it away from the humerus bone.

FOUR, her eye sockets cold & hollow, rips his tongue and a portion of his jaw away.

FIVE, a lanky man missing his right arm, snatches Prince Menelik’s ears from his skull.

SIX, a victim of horrific burns, snatches off everything underneath the patella of his left leg. They repeat the same process with the opposite leg’s lower limb.

SEVEN, a coronary bypass scar across their chest, sinks their ceremonial blade into Prince Menelik’s chest. Seven cracks open the Prince’s chest.

They begin wrapping Prince Menelik’s body in black, ceremonial bandages, The Eternal Knot sown into the fabric’s aesthetic.

Seven holds the Prince’s still beating heart in the air. As the life from Prince Menelik’s fades, the glint of blood capture his eyes in the air before him.

PRINCE MENELIK’S POV: A red, swirling dot. Bloody, clasped hands bursting from its center. It’s perpetually rotating, grabbing the hand in front of it to create an ever-growing Eternal Knot of Infinity.

CUT TO:

TITLE:

GIVE ME BACK MY BODY FROM THE ETERNAL KNOT OF INFINITY

A POEM

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK:

“THE WORLD BEGAN WITH VIOLENCE AND CONSUMPTION.”

CUT TO:

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

The sign advertising the derelict fast food restaurant says, “THE YAK SHAK”; emphasis on the lack of a “C” in the wording.

The sign could say “Burger Queen”, “Doggie Diner”, or “Dingo’s Hamburgers.”

This restaurant is every Mom & Pop shop McDonalds put out of business.

It’s near a strip-mall with chain-locks on the entrance.

A big sign in neon lights at the nearby gas station spells out “Full Frontal XXX.”

No one’s fixed the pot-hole leading to the drive-thru window.

No one comes here anymore.

One, now dressed in white robes, stands at the restaurant’s entrance. One taps their staff.

An ethereal HUM rings out.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

Prince Menelik roars to life inside the kitchen.

He twists and turns what’s left of his body: portions of his face, his midsection, one arm, groin, and upper thighs.

The Prince’s screams illicit no sound. He struggles to stand.

When he feels inside his mouth. No tongue.

He rubs his thumbs against his callouses.

Prince Menelik’s body is wrapped in black, ceremonial bandages; a gritty, matte texture similar to One’s robe.

He peels dark, encrusted blood congealed near the bandages on his face. He touches his neck; pushes his bandages away to feel the scars carved into him.

Prince Menelik pushes down on the mound of skin where his ears should be.

Finally, he explores where his eyes should be. He can only touch wrappings.

His fingers push through to feel nothing underneath.

Prince Menelik's body erupts in spasms.

A full, out of touch experience in a moment it's almost impossible to comprehend.

Prince Menelik does not notice the ceremonial blade, the Eternal Knot emblazoned on its hilt, near his person.

Prince Menelik also does not notice --

CAIN (20s), face & body covered in the same ceremonial bandages, emerging from the darkness of the hallway.

Cain quickly slings his body forward.

He retains his eye, arm, and tongue.

He's scrawny in comparison to Prince Menelik's stout frame.

There's desperation and necessity in his one eye.

Cain knows he wins by striking first.

FOCUS ON: His teeth clenching a ceremonial blade identical to Prince Menelik's ceremonial blade.

Cain knocks away Prince Menelik's blade.

He then wraps his sole arm around Prince Menelik's neck; he pulls him down to his level.

Cain retrieves the blade from his mouth and stabs.

Prince Menelik's mouth curves in pain, despite no sound.

Cain keeps stabbing as quickly as he can.

The Prince catches his arm; he spits up blood before wringing Cain's forearm.

Cain howls. Prince Menelik's grip is all-encompassing.

He swings Cain's arm to one side and grips his neck.

Clamps down. Cain hasn't lost his hold on the blade.

He keeps stabbing.

Throwing his feeble weight into every swing.

A miss or a cleave to the ribs.

The white in Cain’s eyes turn red.

Prince Menelik grits his face. Grip, tightening.

Each stab wound another reason to give up, yet he perseveres.

Cain’s eyes roll into the back of their head. The grip on their blade ceases. The Prince’s assailant dies in his hand.

Prince Menelik loosens his grip. Tumbles over. The wounds to his chest leaving him a slathering mess.

Prince Menelik hurls over. Dies.

Then -- One touches Prince Menelik’s corpse.

The stab wounds dealt vanish.

Prince Menelik heaves to life.

He wretches over his eye sockets.

The SOUND OF SKIN & CELLS REGROWING sends Prince Menelik heaving, stretching across the floor.

He pulls open the wrapping around his eye sockets.

CLOSE ON: Two of the ten long scars vanish from his neck.

PRINCE MENELIK’S POV: Vision rapidly returning, but blurred. One grips a closet door handle.

CLOSE ON: One’s hand leaving the broom closet’s knob. The Eternal Knot’s symbol slithering into existence on its surface.

One stands by the closet. Gestures towards it.

Prince Menelik pauses, his eyesight now fully intact.

He takes in the entirety of his situation.

Glances at Cain’s lifeless body.

Prince Menelik pushes back Cain’s bandages.

PRINCE MENELIK’S POV: Seven long scars cut into his foe’s neck.

Prince Menelik shudders. He looks at One, bows.

Then he drags himself to the restaurant’s entrance.

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Prince Menelik pulls himself to curb of the rural road.

Sweaty. Delirious. He peers out.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: No one around anywhere. No cars approaching.

Prince Menelik drags himself to the entrance of the nearby --

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

The lights around the fueling area are lit.

They partially illuminate the nearby Yak Shak restaurant.

The convenience store is closed. Their lights are out; only the vending machine illuminating the store's vaporware blue.

Prince Menelik tugs on the doors. Locked.

He waits for someone to come.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

The gas station's lights are on. No one's inside.

The bottom half of the entrance's glass has been broken.

A couple of water bottles empty.

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Prince Menelik mangled face obscured by the ceremonial bandages.

He peers out the gas station entrance to the clear sky.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

Prince Menelik drags himself down the side of the highway through the grass.

He spits and dribbles sweat. Steam pouring off his body.

The road leads upwards; a massive hill ahead. He waits.

For anything to come over the horizon.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

Prince Menelik rises from sleep. In the same place he was during the day.

CLOSE ON: Eyes that understand no one will come.

He begins dragging himself the opposite direction.

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - NIGHT

He drags himself to the open entrance of The Yak Shak.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Back into the kitchen where One waits by the broom closet door.

Prince Menelik moves forward. Stops when he sees Cain's blade; the body has vanished.

Prince Menelik grabs it. Quickly darts his eyes around the kitchen.

Waiting for an attack.

Prince Menelik whips around looking. His glare finally lands on --

One, who again, gestures to the broom closet.

Though clearly shaken by his predicament...the reality of it.

Once again, the Prince bows before One.

Then, he anchors himself with the blade.

He raises his arm; his skin touches the surface where the knot slithers.

Prince Menelik opens the broom closet door. Hesitates. Then moves forward.

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK:

“SO COMMUNITY IS BUILT. WE LEARN TO MISTRUST.”

CUT TO:

EXT. SUPERMARKET - PARKING LOT - DAY

Prince Menelik tumbles out a guard booth sequestering the compact parking lot from the street.

The supermarket is peak corporate design: two slightly uneven rectangles glued together like a Tetris block.

The top half is matte-black; The logo “NATURALLY FRESH” punched into the upper framing.

The bottom is frothy white; the sliding doors are right beside green grocery carts with quarter dispensers built into the handle bars.

Prince Menelik props himself up. He looks to the left.

PRINCE MENELIK’S POV: Urban sprawl reigns supreme. Apartments are bunched together; they alternate between fenced-in walk-way or fenced-in backyard.

Homeless tents and litter dominate the sidewalk.

Prince Menelik turns to the supermarket.

PRINCE MENELIK’S POV: It’s a wealth demarcation line. The houses grow more refined the longer you peer up the hill behind the store.

FOCUS ON: A staff tapping the ground. The HUM fills the air.

Prince Menelik turns to see --

Two, dressed in white robes, standing by the guard booth; the booth’s ceiling only reaches Two’s massive shoulders.

The Prince bows before Two. At the same time --

RONALD (80s), ill-fitting pin-striped suit and a wave cap, exits the supermarket’s entrance.

RONALD
Aye! Aye!

Ronald jogs over. You can feel the creak with each step.

Prince Menelik’s eyes light up with fear.

Ronald’s holding a ceremonial blade.

Prince Menelik looks at his hands; empty. Where did it go? Prince Menelik backs away, uncertain.

Prince Menelik spins around. A blade hits the ground near Two's feet. Prince Menelik scrambles towards it.

FOCUS ON: Ronald's jog turning into a run!

Prince Menelik reaches for the blade.

Slashes themselves trying to grab it.

Pain sweeps over Prince Menelik's bandaged face. He sucks it in. Grabs the blade. Flips around. And --

Ronald tosses his blade right in front of him.

CLANK! The sound barely masks Prince Menelik's confusion.

Ronald's half-keeled over, panting. Prince Menelik leans in; squints.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: Ronald's missing an eye. The socket is merely flesh.

Ronald speaks in ENGLISH, subtitled:

RONALD (CONT'D)
Kid. Lemme tell you something. Don't make an old-ass man run like that. Fuck you. I am trying to show you I'm about peace, but here you go crawling after something to cut me with. So I gotta run a little faster to get to you a little quicker cuz I ain't trynna get cut either. Just like you! So that's making you go quicker too. Survival of the fittest, baby, I get it. You're not going to look back and see some kinda good in my eyes to change ya mind. All you're gonna see is a stranger running at you with intent to kill. So I did that.

Ronald lays down on the ground as he points to his blade. He's out of breath. Rolls over leaving himself vulnerable.

It's hard for Prince Menelik to gauge what's going on.

RONALD (CONT'D)
If you don't try to fuck me up in the next ten seconds then that makes us friends.

Prince Menelik uses his own blade to pull Ronald's one towards himself.

The ten seconds pass.

Ronald struggles up with every joint causing a groan. He walks it off; sizes Prince Menelik up.

Glances at Two.

RONALD (CONT'D)
Y'all took everything but the dashboard from him. Jesus.

Ronald sets his sight back on Prince Menelik. Mulls.

RONALD (CONT'D)
I ain't ever seen somebody cut up as you. Those bandages are the only thing keeping your guts from spilling out. How are you even alive?

RONALD'S POV: Prince Menelik's bandaged up ear sockets.

He turns his back to Prince Menelik. Shouts.

RONALD (CONT'D)
Tap the knife three times if you can hear what I'm saying.

Ronald turns around. Prince Menelik has done nothing.

RONALD (CONT'D)
Well that's just good strategy. Play the fool till the very last moment. Since it's obvious you can read lips.

Ronald leans in looking for a reaction. Again, Prince Menelik gives none. Ronald steps forward.

Prince Menelik holds up his blade.

RONALD (CONT'D)
Or maybe I'm giving you too much credit.

Ronald walks all the way back to the supermarket's entrance.

CLOSE ON: Ronald's hand grabbing a quarter, from a line of quarters, laying on the supermarket's window lining.

Ronald rolls back with a shopping cart.

RONALD (CONT'D)
Name's Ronald. I'm going in there for snacks.

He points to the supermarket.

RONALD (CONT'D)
Then I'm going up there.

He points to a house way high up in the hills.

RONALD (CONT'D)
And I'd like company.

He points to Prince Menelik while flipping open the child seat.

Prince Menelik hurls the blade in his hands.

It lands inside a fenced-in yard.

He picks up the blade Ronald surrendered to him. Prince Menelik points to the shopping cart, then holds the blade close to his chest.

Ronald blows air, chuckles.

INT. SUPERMARKET - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Posh. High class. There's a cowbell attached to a wooden post for customers to clang when they're near the check-out area.

The liquor's still tucked behind glass, lock, & key. Prince Menelik's inside the shopping cart hugging the blade.

Ronald's behind the customer service desk fiddling with the sound system controls.

Music plays over the stereo system.

[SUGGESTION: BEFORE I LET GO - MAZE FT. FRANKIE BEVERLY]

Ronald points to Prince Menelik while he jigs; bobbing his head to the music.

RONALD
What you know about the classics, young-blood!?

Prince Menelik glares; he looks away from Ronald.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: Potato chip bags on display near a check-out stand.

Prince Menelik squints. Something feels off. He positions the blade between himself and a pillar.

He pushes himself off, using the forward momentum to reach the display.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: Now that he looks...truly looks. The bag of chips no longer have visible words. Professionally designed logos, photoshopped pictures of chips, and text frames are there, but no words.

He grabs a bag, turns it around: the nutrition facts, bar code, and any other identifiable information has been wiped.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: Every item near him is exactly the same. Every word on them has vanished.

CLOSE ON: A meat mallet crashes through the liquor cabinet.

Prince Menelik whips around to Ronald pulling out vodka. He runs back to Prince Menelik, triumphant.

Prince Menelik holds up the blade.

Ronald rolls his eyes. Throws the meat mallet to the ground. Prince Menelik yields.

Ronald points to the bag.

RONALD (CONT'D)
Freaky, ain't it. The more you look. The more you really try to look; everything starts doing that. It's all real till it isn't.

Cautiously, Ronald grasps the handle bars. He pushes the shopping cart through the aisles only throwing junk food inside.

RONALD (CONT'D)
First thing you should know about me is I'm paranoid. So I've been looking around this world real hard. It's all like a big sick, simulation. You'd think whoever's running it would do a better job hiding the bugs, but maybe that's the point. Maybe they want us to know there's nowhere to hide.

Ronald points to the store camera following them. Ronald brings the cart to a stop outside a door. He opens it; pushes Prince Menelik over to peer in.

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Small, tight. A single computer, desk, and chair can fit.

The light is on. The computer monitor is split into four parts; each one surveying a different section of the supermarket. No one is inside.

INT. SUPERMARKET - CONTINUOUS

Ronald shrugs. Prince Menelik's face, what we can see, is perturbed. They get back to sorting through the aisle.

Ronald continues to choose junk food. Prince Menelik ruffles though the assortment of junk food now around him.

He holds up the same bag of chips he picked up before. Stares at its lack of identity.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Ronald and Prince Menelik exit the supermarket. Two watches Ronald push the shopping cart full of junk food and half a human body up a steep hill.

EXT. STEEP HILL - CONTINUOUS

The sidewalk behind the supermarket has a sharp incline upward.

CLOSE ON: Ronald rubbing his weathered fingers across a long scar on his neck. Only one.

Prince Menelik notices. He turns to watch the skyline grow higher. For a moment, at peace.

RONALD
I'm talking to you like you got ears. Ain't that something. Folks back home would say I'm crazy as fuck and they'd probably be right, you know that? I wasn't kidding when I said I ain't seen nothing like you. You started off low. Real low. There's nobody out there with as much gone as you. I been in here for years and I know a new *thing* when I see one. What is here though? Hell if I know.
(MORE)

RONALD (CONT'D)
Wish I could say it's all one fucked up dream, but I ain't buying that no more. There's the doors like the ones you and me came through. They take you to random places. Times. Back and forth between now and the future, maybe. I think it's better to call'm portals cuz it's like you're getting dropped into little play-sets built for something we ain't meant to understand. Most folks you meet talk English, but even when they don't...you can almost feel what they're telling you. What if we're all talking in our own languages and it's been re-wired to make sense to everyone else no matter what?

Ronald tears open the plastic containing a donut.

RONALD (CONT'D)
This is bad for me.

Prince Menelik hasn't engaged at any moment; he's simply staring into the distance.

RONALD (CONT'D)
My son's always talking about weird techno-stuff that's just around the corner. I don't know which corner he's talking about. But I like to hear it when he calls. So what do you think this all is? My intuition is telling me aliens. Ain't nothing else those robed bastards with their big, old wands could be. They're obviously inter-dimensional beings sent to fuck with us. My boy tells me be open to the possibilities. So maybe it's the afterlife. We're in purgatory. Or Limbo. Half-alive. Half-dead. Or all dead. Still, it ain't like I saw some car lights flash before my eyes and *poof;* I'm here. I was in my bed, then I was fighting for my life. Maybe it's different for everybody. Heh! Or maybe this is the chaos of existence. Our final moments played out somewhere we'll never tell the living.
(MORE)

RONALD (CONT'D)
No one I care about would believe my ass. My family would probably send me back!

Ronald pops open a power drink.

RONALD (CONT'D)
Here's what I do know. It's the secret to everything. This ain't gladiator shit. It's not a battle of attrition. It's all about patience. Two people pop up out of nowhere. The folks running this want one of us to die, then they open up a portal. Here's the catch. They're going to open one up no matter what. All you gotta do is wait one day. One day and you ain't gotta kill nobody. But folks never wait. They probably know people won't no matter what. Nobody's talking. Nobody's working together. Folks just get to killing the minute they find out there's a quicker way to the exit; especially if they're up against dead weight. But we're gonna be better than that. That's why we're heading up to that house way up yonder. We're getting a good workout so we can eat, drink, and shit ourselves silly. Then we'll black out. And wake up to our exit.

A bench protrudes from the steep hill's sidewalk. Below, a winding road down to the supermarket. Ronald douses water over his sweaty face. He parks the shopping cart where Prince Menelik's can enjoy the sky.

Prince Menelik breathes it in; as if such air was never afforded to him. Ronald glances at Prince Menelik.

RONALD'S POV: Prince Menelik's massive in frame; with or without limbs.

RONALD (CONT'D)
You are one big motherfucker, you know that. You're missing a couple spare parts, but you got the frame to play on Saturday. Maybe Sunday too. You and my son got the same build. Stocky. Big, but low to the ground like a tank. The boy was a beast in college.
(MORE)

RONALD (CONT'D)
Played a little professional too. I'll show you a couple of tapes when we get out.

Ronald offers Prince Menelik water. Prince Menelik thinks it over; he sets down the blade. Drinks. A sign of trust. Ronald smiles.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE HILLS - DAY

Prince Menelik looks inside the home's front arched windows.

The inside's cozy: fireplace, skylight, plush couch, and fluffy rug. There's nothing modern or fancy about the inside.

It's a regular house with a priceless location. Ronald checks under the rug, above the door, and around the bushes.

RONALD
Don't go nowhere.

Prince Menelik glares. Ronald heads out of sight around the house. Prince Menelik peers from the front window, through the living room, to the patio sliding backdoors.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: Ronald passes in and out frame; moments later Ronald returns to the backdoors with a fat grin on his face.

He unlocks the patio door; Ronald runs through the living room to unlock the front door. He dangles the keys, chuckling.

RONALD (CONT'D)
They should call me a detective.

Ronald wheels Prince Menelik inside.

INT. HOUSE IN THE HILLS - CONTINUOUS

Ronald parks the shopping cart, along with Prince Menelik, in the kitchen. He rummages through the cabinets, never closing them. He pulls a bamboo platter from underneath the kitchen island.

RONALD
You ever had a charcuterie board young-blood? Let a connoisseur of the culinary arts hook you up.

Ronald opens the fridge door; rolls up his sleeves.

He grabs a knife from a block set near the fridge; immediately turns to Prince Menelik. Prince Menelik gestures with his hand. *Do as you will.*

FOCUS ON: Ronald's hands prepping.

He carves sausage into slices.

Peels and cuts the avocado.

Divides cheese into stacks.

Slices bell-peppers, cucumbers, pickles, and strawberries.

Plates it with grapes, olives, hummus, and carrots.

Ronald pulls artisan crackers from the top cabinet; tastes one. His face scrunches up.

He dips into the shopping cart, opens a bag of chips, and dumps them on the platter. Prince Menelik gives Ronald a look about his last action.

RONALD (CONT'D)
You talking a lot of shit for someone who can't say nothing.

Ronald wheels Prince Menelik to the sliding backdoors.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE HILLS - PATIO - CONTINUOUS

Ronald parks Prince Menelik underneath a sunbrella. He jogs back inside.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: The patio overlooks the city. It's a wondrous sight.

Ronald pulls up small table.

Jogs back inside

He brings out the charcuterie board.

Jogs back inside.

He returns with a large bottle of orange juice; collapses into the lounge chair.

Ronald starts to get settled until --

Ronald and Prince Menelik's eyes land on each other.

Ronald runs back inside one more time.

He returns with a sofa cushion and offers it to Prince Menelik. Prince Menelik takes it; uses the cushion as a buffer between the junk food and his lower body.

Ronald fully settles into his chair. He gestures to the view.

RONALD
Ain't this something. I don't got no big words for it, but I know it's exactly what we needed.

Ronald pours orange juice into his vodka.

RONALD (CONT'D)
Now, I could've picked any of these houses for the view, right? The sky's a sky. Those buildings don't get anymore interesting from another angle. This place in particular just reminds me of my boy's old spot. He got it after a couple seasons. Nothing too fancy or big. Donovan's just like his old man. Frugal. It ain't about stunting. Nah. You gotta build generational wealth when the opportunity presents itself. Ain't no bigger opportunity than playing ball where we from. That's a lottery ticket. And what's the first thing you always secure? Somewhere you can eat, shit, and sleep and you don't pay nobody rent. Fuck a landlord.

Ronald takes more sips. Really ponders for a moment.

RONALD (CONT'D)
He did good. I'm proud of what he did. But one day the boy came to me talking about hanging it up. I'm thinking...hang it up? Boy, you ain't even twenty-four yet and you want to retire. I was in the pulp factory getting my hands crunched up for a decade to get you where you are. Me and ya Momma worked our asses off to build something decent and you talk like that. When you can fix every problem this family's got if you play a couple more years. But he just said no, I'm done.

Ronald shakes his head.

RONALD (CONT'D)
And I said some things that I shouldn't have said.

Ronald turns away from Prince Menelik; emotional.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE IN THE HILLS - PATIO - NIGHT

Ronald's passed out; drunk.

THUD! A body hits the ground, unseen.

Prince Menelik, blade in hand, drags himself over to Ronald.

He pulls Ronald's body to a flat position; uses his blade to push Ronald's collar away to reveal -- the one lone, long scar across Ronald's neck.

Prince Menelik's eyes fixate on it until --

Ronald's awake. He hasn't moved an inch, but he's watching Prince Menelik.

Prince Menelik pushes his blade closer to Ronald's neck. A spurt of blood runs down the blade.

Ronald stays silent. A thousand hours escape the universe in these intimate seconds.

Finally, Prince Menelik backs away.

He crawls into a lounge chair, nearby.

Lays down; his sights turned away from Ronald.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: A few blinks then...his eyes close from exhaustion.

FADE IN:

EXT. HOUSE IN THE HILLS - PATIO - DAWN

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: The gleam of the rising sun pierces Prince Menelik's eyelids. His body violently jerks back and forth.

Prince Menelik's eyes crack open! Ronald's wrapped his one, working hand in industrial tape.

It's impossible for Prince Menelik to get it off. He peels backwards away from the old man.

RONALD
I really don't know if a door-way shows up if you wait a day. I admit I lied about a couple of things. Maybe you figured that out last night. Maybe you always knew.

He looks around for his weapon. Ronald holds it up.

RONALD (CONT'D)
I was a deacon back at my church. I use to take pride in that. Donovan use to look at me so proud when I brought the pastor out. It meant something. That I was man of dignity. I wonder what he'd see now? What I'm doing to get back to everyone; to him. You think he'd say this shit is right? I hope not. I didn't teach him to be like this.

Ronald advances.

RONALD (CONT'D)
I hope you don't think bad of me. The company was a good change of pace. My head needed it.

Prince Menelik desperately tries to open the now-closed sliding doors.

RONALD (CONT'D)
I never found out if you could hear what I'm saying or not; doesn't matter now. So I'm just going to say it. Thank you. You're the reason I'm one step closer to apologizing.

Ronald clamps down on his shoulder. Prince Menelik violently lashes out. Ronald pins Prince Menelik down; thrusts the blade into Prince Menelik's guts.

Prince Menelik slumps to the floor. Tears of pain mix with saliva. Ronald takes his companion's hand as --

The light leaves Prince Menelik's eyes. Two, now standing out on the patio, taps their staff.

A HUM fills the air.

EXT. THE ALTAR OF FLOWERS - TWILIGHT

What's left of Prince Menelik's body rests on the altar, wrapped in the black ceremonial bandages.

One of the seven's hands reaches in, slices through the ceremonial bandages, and rips the remaining arm away.

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK:

"WE BECOME COMPLICIT, UPHOLD, & RATIONALIZE."

CUT TO:

INT. SEWERS - NIGHT

Rainwater pours from a drain high above the old, brick walls. Prince Menelik awakens in a heap of scum, sludge, & excrement.

One sits nearby. The tunnel is small and cramped.

Prince Menelik struggles to wipe the dirt and grime from his face when reality hits him.

He stares at his right shoulder; the one arm he had is gone.

One places Prince Menelik's ceremonial blade near him.

He looks up with hurt and confusion at One, who barely registers his glare.

Prince Menelik calms his nerves; looks ahead. He carefully locks the ceremonial blade between his teeth.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: He strains to see anything further down the tunnel.

Prince Menelik crawls forward, heaving each side of his body forward until he nears a vertical sewage drain.

He rolls over. Peers around for any alternative, but no solution presents itself.

He steels himself for what he'll need to do next. He heaves his body down the sewage drain --

SPLASH! Prince Menelik's body drops into moving water.

INT. UNDERNEATH THE SURFACE - CONTINUOUS

The dirt, muck, and shit obscures Prince Menelik's view.

He's suffocating. Scrapping. Fighting.

Flailing for anything to stop his momentum. The current slams him into --

INT. SEWERS - ABANDONED TUNNEL - NIGHT

Stairs leading out of the wastewater.

The impact makes Prince Menelik lose his toothy grip on his blade.

Prince Menelik slowly drags himself up the walkway through dung & feces caked to the stair's steps & wall.

Weak CRIES fill the air. Prince Menelik doesn't react to this. Instead -- Up ahead; light.

Prince Menelik crawls forwards, turning the slow, winding corner until he reaches a dead-end.

A NEWBORN, no more than a month old, whimpers inside its swaddle; a ceremonial blade lays near the child.

Prince Menelik crawls forward to examine the newborn.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: The child has no ears, eyes, or nose. Its face is protected by the same bandages covering Prince Menelik. If one could peer inside its swaddle, you'd find no limbs.

There's only a mouth to tremble over a cruel, unfair world. Prince Menelik's horrified; his eyes give sway to his disgust, then sympathy.

The newborn continues to CRY; the wail is piercing, repeated, & methodical.

Prince Menelik lowers his forehead to the newborn's lips.

The sudden taste of familiarity fills the newborn's face with surprise. Someone else is there.

The newborn's cries soften, then vanish.

Prince Menelik smiles. A rarity, one that takes unique effort through the tight, oppressive bandages.

Prince Menelik looks ahead. The dead-end has an exit. There's a rusty, steel door; it's access hidden behind bolt & lock.

Prince Menelik crawls forward. The newborn starts crying again. Prince Menelik uses the door's bar to prop himself up to see more.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: The exit is dark, wet, and covered in grass pushing through the brick floor. The tunnel leads into darkness.

Prince Menelik looks at the bolt & lock. The Eternal Knot's symbol is emblazoned upon it.

Prince Menelik realizes what he'll need to do next.

He crawls back to the newborn.

Lays his head near its lips, assuaging the child's fear.

The newborn calms.

Prince Menelik closes his eyes and fully leans over. The entirety of his body pushes down on the newborn.

The newborn squirms. Its sobs are muffled by the pressure of Prince Menelik's frame.

Prince Menelik's eyes remain closed. The newborn's writhing wains.

The SOBBING dying out with each breath until -- the newborn succumbs to the suffocation; passes away.

Prince Menelik shrieks. He rolls over and curls into a ball.

The bandages around his face splitting to reveal...his nose is regrowing! Prince Menelik nostrils flare as he takes a giant breath inwards.

He vomits what little he drank with Ronald. The smell emanating is revolting.

Prince Menelik pulls himself up to see -- One unlocking the bolt to the door. They gesture for Prince Menelik to move ahead.

Prince Menelik glances back at the newborn.

He crawls towards the child and uses his teeth to pull the hood of the swaddle over its face.

Prince Menelik crawls past One, looks up at him with disbelief.

But still...he bows. Then exits through the unlocked door.

INT. SEWERS - PASSAGEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Droplets leak from the stone walls.

They splatter on Prince Menelik's forehead as he presses forward. He mucks sprouts of grass, moss, and foliage thriving in the damp refuge.

The tunnel grows damper. The walls grow closer.

The light grows dimmer. Prince Menelik looks behind him.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: A speck of light far off.

One locks the steel-door. Now, there is no option but onward.

Prince Menelik trudges ahead. Mud caking his bandages. Saliva mixing with scum-water every-time he tumbles.

The walls have become oppressively hindering.

The tunnel narrows every passing moment.

Prince Menelik hyperventilates.

Squirms. Breathes in heavy.

It's a fight for every inch.

The passageway has become rocky, jagged; no different than finding yourself in a cavern.

The ceiling and floor are so compact Prince Menelik would be crushed if the slightest rumble pushed either extreme tighter together.

Prince Menelik keeps moving; whimpering, snot-filled, and gnashing with all his energy and will to live!

Till the only light we can see is the whites of his eyes.

The sound of his frantic heaves his only companion.

All light leaves the passageway.

Prince Menelik is cast into total darkness as he toils forward.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: Pitch-black. Total, pitch-black obscurity. A swirling torrent of darkness ahead.

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK:

"WE GROW APATHETIC TO COPE."

CUT TO:

INT. CRAPPY APARTMENT - CLOSET - DAY

Then, the jagged stone ceiling oppressing Prince Menelik's movements becomes frilly, soft; swaying with every nudge from his body.

Perplexed, Prince Menelik uprights himself to see -- light ahead.

He creeps towards salvation. The jagged, cavernous bottom of the passageway transitions into blotted, beige apartment rug.

The light growing closer illuminates the new ceiling, revealing it as the bottom of hung-up clothes.

Prince Menelik feverishly crawls out of the closet doors.

INT. CRAPPY APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Into a pigsty. The apartment's owner rarely cleans up. There's bundles of clothes and unwashed "everything" all around the apartment.

Two stands near the closet doors behind a pile of dirty clothes.

Prince Menelik sees his ceremonial blade laying on the bed; opposite side of the room.

He bows before Two then crawls through emptied-out takeout boxes, filthy cups, soda cans, and twisted-up water bottles to retrieve it.

SQUISH.

He looks down to see the bottom portion of his body is soaked in a putrid, yellow filth.

Prince Menelik heaves, but presses on.

Prince Menelik then wrestles himself over a heap of trash to see --

The mural-like scattering of posters over the entire bedroom wall.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: The posters all feature the same Korean-Pop boyband with the name "PURITY" etched in large letters.

All FIVE BOYBAND MEMBERS are beautiful, young, and handsome. Prince Menelik's eyes surf through each of them.

Prince Menelik stops on the biggest poster; he squints. Moves in closer.

FOCUS ON: The final member...their head has been augmented. Cybernetic lines run across the creases of his face like removable plates; capable of mixing and matching a smile, cheeks, eyes, or a jawline.

Prince Menelik's puzzled by the final member's appearance.

A door in the apartment SQUEAKS open.

Prince Menelik swings around to survey his surroundings.

Two hasn't moved.

The bedroom door is slightly ajar.

He bites the hilt of his blade, picking it up.

INT. CRAPPY APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Prince Menelik pokes his head out a few inches into the hallway.

The front door comes to an abrupt halt, a sliver of it still ajar.

He checks his right; nothing down that way.

Prince Menelik crawls down the hallway till he reaches the doorless entryway leading into the --

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Prince Menelik pushes his body against the entryway wall.

Cautiously, he leans around the corner.

ULEMA (40s), formal military uniform, long hair, searches the floor.

Prince Menelik can't see her face from his current position.

He can see she's missing a leg.

She desperately searches for something nearby.

Prince Menelik spots her goal: a cane.

She holds her other hand to *feel* around the apartment.

Prince Menelik's eye's light up when Ulema finally turns towards him.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: Ulema's skin is dark-red. Cybernetic-lines segmenting her face; a rectangular, white tattoo extends across both of her eyes -- or more importantly, where her eye's would be if she had them.

This is an opportunity.

Prince Menelik stalks towards her.

He moves slow, keeping his body low to the ground.

Ulema's search leads her closer to the cane.

Prince Menelik picks up his pace.

The blade slightly skids across the floor.

Ulema stops searching for a moment; she never turns around.

Prince Menelik stops. Then -- progresses with judicious intent.

Ulema helplessly explores the floor.

Prince Menelik edges closer...closer...

He wills himself upwards on the nubs of his limbs.

Grits down on the blade, ready to plunge to bring his full weight down onto her back.

Ulema effortlessly seizes the cane and spins around, swinging.

THWACK!

The blade falls out of Prince Menelik's mouth.

THWACK!

Blood seeps from the hollow space Prince Menelik's ear would occupy.

THWACK!

He's incapacitated, but conscious.

Ulema repositions herself on the floor near him.

Prince Menelik's head still rings, but enough of him is there to notice a peculiarity.

Ulema's back faces Prince Menelik. He cannot see her face.

She slides her hand underneath the chair nearby, grabbing her ceremonial blade.

She waves it in front of Prince Menelik.

Ulema speaks in a foreign, alien language Prince Menelik cannot understand, SUBTITLED:

ULEMA
Poor, little wretch. Clawing; scraping to take back what's yours. So quick to judge your adversary unworthy of breath. Was I merely prey? The next step on your path to freedom. Did you not find my situation abhorrent?

Ulema parts her hair to REVEAL: a third eye resting between the crown and occipital bone of her head.

The third eye unfurls; focuses its intent on Prince Menelik.

ULEMA (CONT'D)
I found yours contemptible.

Prince Menelik's shock is evident.

ULEMA (CONT'D)
I see. An ancestor.

Ulema grips the cane, using its support to hoist herself onto a nearby chair.

ULEMA (CONT'D)
I was born in the 77th century. Just a few years after a portion of mankind left home. My parents told me Earth was burning;
(MORE)

ULEMA (CONT'D)
an unsustainable husk. Leaving was but mere inevitably. We were chosen. Granted grace. A second chance to restart humanity on a righteous path.

She stands up, balancing her weight between the cane and her lone leg.

She allows her third eye to survey the entire area.

ULEMA (CONT'D)
Lies. All of them. My parents were a necessary tool for those who broke the back of the proletariat. As they escaped planetary retribution, I was baptized in starlight.

Ulema hobbles down the hallway. She slides her hand against the wall.

There's a satisfaction to her touch; one that yearns for greater connection.

ULEMA (CONT'D)
I always dreamed about visiting Earth. To see humanity's beginnings, the staging grounds for our primordial dawn. I wanted to feel the warmth of a rising sun touching my cheeks. I'd take my friends to a real beach. We'd dip our hands into the muddy sands and let the ocean wash away our laughter. Then I'd sit there -- looking up at a clear, blue sky. I'd breathe in the chill making my hair stand on end. Scream. Scream and shout and laugh and cry. So everyone could hear me -- and I'd tell them what a blessing it is to be here together. In a place we know so little, but love so dearly. I dedicated my life to studying this world -- our world -- knowing I'd never see it for myself. And yet, here I am.

Ulema turns the corner. She vanishes into the hallway.

ULEMA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Capable of experiencing humankind's roots, endlessly.
(MORE)

ULEMA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Forever witnessing the “great before” with my own eyes. It’s a researcher’s dream.

Prince Menelik can’t see her anymore, so he turns his attention to something far more important --

ULEMA (O.S.) (CONT’D)
And a little girl’s utopia. I use to wake up at night and wonder...how lonely it must be to shine so brightly in the void. Never planting your feet on solid ground. Adrift in a cosmic sea. So why would that little girl ever want to go back? When she can spend a thousand years, here. Doing it all.

The front door still ajar; a means to escape.

Prince Menelik rolls over on his stomach.

He drags himself forward.

ULEMA (O.S.) (CONT’D)
She can find everything. Know everything. Read everything.

Drool and blood mix on the carpet.

ULEMA (O.S.) (CONT’D)
Feel everything.

Prince Menelik heaves in and out, exhausted but unbeaten.

ULEMA (O.S) (CONT’D)
Now, she’s been granted grace. A true lifetime of infinite lifetimes to actualize.

He heaves his upper body against the front door, further pushing it open; freedom in front of him!

FOCUS ON: Ulema plunging a syringe into Prince Menelik’s neck.

Fluid shoots into his veins. Prince Menelik seizes up then relaxes.

Ulema crashes beside him, her third eye facing Prince Menelik.

She jabs a syringe into her neck.

ULEMA (CONT'D)
In 3789, a small island off the North American coast experienced one of the worst viral outbreaks in human history. With no available cure, the U.N. enacted a total-quarantine. Supplies could be dropped in, but no one could leave. Anyone from the country who tried was shot on sight. The virus had a 99% kill rate; devastating the entire population. You were considered dead on arrival if you had any visible symptoms. The bodies piled up so quickly, they started sending in a small, little needle tucked away in the supplies. A new medicine specifically made for such a scenario by the same company that caused the outbreak. If you just gave yourself a little prick...you'd see the most beautiful thing right there, right in front of you, then nothing. That's a fair trade-off, isn't it little wretch? No fight. No killing. None of the barbarity. We simply experience; together. Then, we let chance make its decision. Either way, I continue my journey.

Ulema breathes in heavily, relaxes; her words are delirious.

ULEMA (CONT'D)
Yes. I like our deal. We all win our personal heaven.

Ulema points ahead.

Prince Menelik follows her direction.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: The great, white ocean.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PRINCE'S CABIN - TWILIGHT

Prince Menelik, naked, but body fully intact, picks his head up from the soft sand.

Waves chop and flow underneath a full moon.

Prince Menelik feels himself, all of his body given back to him.

Prince Menelik weeps; tears full of joy. He digs his nails into his back. The skin peels.

Prince Menelik screams. He's here. Altogether.

Laughs. He turns around to see his beachside home. Calling him to rest.

He heads up the path until --

Prince Menelik tumbles to the grounds. Perplexed, he looks down to see one of his legs has vanished.

Prince Menelik scrambles towards his home.

Another arms disappears.

Prince Menelik plows into the ground.

He lifts his head, scuttling as best he can with his remaining limbs.

The next arm vanishes.

Prince Menelik slams into the pavement leading up to the house.

The last leg vanishes, leaving Prince Menelik inert & helpless; face to the ground.

Prince Menelik lets out a pained, gravelly wail to the heavens --

Midway, his voice vanishes.

As he turns his whole body face-forward, Prince Menelik's eyes, nose, and tongue have vanished.

He's a husk screaming into this own, personal void.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAPPY APARTMENT - NIGHT

Prince Menelik, back to his limb-less self, heaves upwards; crashing into the wall.

He can stand!

Prince Menelik's legs dangle underneath him, the final mass of cells regrowing themselves at the tips of his toes.

Prince Menelik looks down to see -- Ulema's corpse, slumped over.

A look of bliss covers her face; her third eye still open, but lifeless.

Two emerges from the hallway to close the front door.

CLOSE ON: The Eternal Knot's symbol slithering into existence on the door's oak panel.

Two gestures to Prince Menelik; open the door.

Before Prince Menelik does so, he bends down to invoke a small show of compassion.

He uses what is left of his upper limb to cover the third eye's now hollow, piercing stare.

Two awaits Prince Menelik at the door.

He pries the door open with teeth; saliva sputtering off his mouth as he grips the handle with his teeth.

Two taps their staff.

A HUM fills the air.

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK:

"WE JUSTIFY OUR ACTIONS TO ENSURE SURVIVAL."

CUT TO:

INT. AMERICAN DEPARTMENT STORE CHAIN - DAY

JACOB (10), dirty, overused army fatigues and boots, slams into a wall of men's suits.

The boy clutches his shoulder, sliding his hand to his upper limb; his forearm has been taken from him.

Jacob reels from the sensory overload.

JACOB'S POV: The zigzagging patterns of a store floor. Mannequins posed in modern formalwear. The ever-climbing slope of escalators leading upwards.

Finally, his eyes rest on --

Three, who stands at attention near the section of clothes Jacob heaved himself into.

Jacob unfurls his hand, now grasping where his arm use to be situated.

The boy gives himself the moment to stew in a realization...he isn't imagining what stands before him.

Three sets Jacob's ceremonial blade on a nearby rack of clothes.

Jacob picks it up.

His eyes meet the guarded glare of Three's masked face.

Jacob's face grows dour.

In this moment, he understands.

A door somewhere in the department CREAKS open.

Jacob grips the blade close to his chest.

He cautiously edges out into the main aisle of the department store chain.

Where the section for menswear and womenswear collide.

Jacob edges forward with a brave face.

Down the aisle near the electronics -- Prince Menelik steps into the department store.

CLOSE ON: Three closing the door behind Prince Menelik. An "EMPLOYEES ONLY" sign prominently on display.

Prince Menelik finally notices Jacob.

The blade shakes in Jacob's hand. He declares his intention with reluctance.

Prince Menelik head whips in a direction away from Jacob.

He flees.

Jacob can barely register the shock before he gives chase.

Jacob reaches Prince Menelik's previous spot to see ---

Prince Menelik sprinting out of the department store's entrance before disappearing down an escalator.

EXT. AMERICAN DEPARTMENT STORE CHAIN - CONTINUOUS

Jacob reaches the escalator to check for his adversary. There's no trace of Prince Menelik, anywhere.

Jacob cautiously heads down the escalator steps, mesmerized by the wondrous, new world around him.

Jacob keeps his blade close as he peers into the numerous chain-stores, open and operational, but with no employees.

Jacob stops when he sees a smattering of toys on a department store.

INT. TOY STORE - CONTINUOUS

Jacob picks up the dancing bear on the floor. It flips in his hands. Startled, he drops it.

It hits the ground, dancing alongside the other animals stepping and flipping. Jacob smiles.

He grabs a large toy gun. He holds it up. POW! Hits himself with a dart. He laughs; turns around the toy gun and aims.

POP! POP! POP! A tower of toys topple. Jacob giggles.

The toppled tower of toys reveals a stand with a protective covering. Inside, a video game console attached to a TV.

ON SCREEN: The video game character taps its foot; waiting on someone to play the game.

Jacob walks up to the video game; mesmerized.

He drops his blade.

He touches a button on the controller. The character jumps. Jacob jumps; grins. He grabs the controller, presses buttons, making the character jump, flip, and jump...into a hole and die.

Jacob's grins falls... until the character appears on screen again. He skips in excitement.

Jacob keeps playing, a gleam of light in his eyes.

MONTAGE:

Jacob bounces from store to store.

- Jacob holds up the latest fashion. Scrunches his notes. Puts it back.

- A stack of shoes are neatly laid out in the shoe store. Jacob throws on sporty, all-white high top sneakers. Menelik nods his head. *These ones.* He grabs basketball shorts, socks, and a t-shirt.

- He THWACKS a baseball off its tee into the sports store's rafters.

- Jacob carefully paints the outline of a clay pot inside a recreational pottery store.

- He tosses the pot from the third floor of the mall, watching it smash on the ground.

- Menelik walks into an escape room storefront. He walks behind the counter into the entrance. AHHHH! A bone-crunching scream, lights, and fog blares. Terrified, Jacob runs out.

- He pulls a hot, steaming calzone pizza off the heating racks in the mall cafeteria. He takes a big bite. He spits it out cause it's so damn hot. Blows. Blows again, then takes another bite.

- Jacob rides on the merry-go-round. Calzone pizza in one hand. He digs into his pocket and pulls out half-eaten comically, large candy bar. Menelik's belly gurgles.

- Outside the bathroom stall, Jacob slightly dangles off the floor. He lets out a big, wet rip of fart.

MONTAGE ENDS.

INT. AMERICAN DEPARTMENT STORE CHAIN - LATER

POW!

Three feels a thud against their body.

They look down to see Jacob with a shopping basket; it's filled with game consoles, TV, and all the wires from the toy store.

Jacob pulls out the TV and plugs into an outlet in a department column.

Then the game console. Then all the wires.

Jacob plugs in two controllers, turns it on.

Three does not move.

Jacob starts playing.

A moment passes over Jacob and Three.

Finally, Jacob sets the other controller in front of them. Three ignores him.

Saddened, Jacob goes back to playing the game.

A beat. Three's massive hand reaches down to set the controller back by Jacob and the game.

Jacob sadness emanates off him.

Three taps their staff.

CLOSE ON: The button on the controller starts moving.

DING! DING!

The game starts. Jacob grins from ear to ear.

The TV's glow illuminates boy and god as they play.

CUT TO:

INT. AMERICAN DEPARTMENT STORE CHAIN – LATER

Jacob's passed out around chips, soda, and candy.

The video game's on pause in the background.

Three gently places a blanket over Jacob.

The god rises to find Prince Menelik standing a few feet away.

Waiting.

Prince Menelik advances.

Three steps in front of the child and taps their staff.

An ethereal HUM echoes.

Prince Menelik collapses in abject pain and horror.

In an instant, his skin and bandages are gone.

He's a bloodied, mangled, man without skin, flayed and ripped from his body.

He screams and vomits out his intestines.

The ethereal HUM ceases.

SOMEONE is gripping Three's hand, stopping them from further damage.

One, the first, grabs the staff and rips it away.

Prince Menelik rises up, his skin and wrappings now intact.

The Prince watches the two gods disagree.

Three rips its hand away. One stands in front.

Jacob yawns.

Prince Menelik advances towards the sleeping Jacob.

Looks down at him.

He closes his eyes, blocks it out.

Jacob's eye's open.

They are instantly filled with terror.

CUT AWAY TO:

JACOB (O.S.)
(in English, subtitled)
No!

STOMP!

A scream rings out.

The sound of a throat being CRUSHED underfoot.

Struggle, crying. Then, silence.

One watches the spectacle.

Three does not.

Prince Menelik falls to his knees; agony written upon him.

He grabs his shoulder. Gurgles in pain.

CLOSE ON: His arm, now regrowing, hits the ground like a ton of bricks.

EVEN CLOSER ON: The final cells rapidly regrowing his finger tips.

Prince Menelik grips and feels his reclaimed arm.

Three taps their staff.

A HUM fills the department store.

CLOSE ON: A men's bathroom sign. The Eternal Knot slithers into existence.

Prince Menelik bows.

But this time, there's no prostration. No falling to his knees. He simply lowers his head.

He picks up his blade, walks to the bathroom, opens it, and exits.

Three returns to the young boy's body.

CLOSE ON: Jacob's vacant, dead eyes.

Three taps their staff.

A HUM fills the air.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER BANK - NIGHT

Blood drains into the polluted stream.

The Seven stand around Jacob's dead, decapitated body.

A shot to the heart bleeds from the black ceremonial bandages covering his chest area.

Near, his bloody army fatigues and semi-automatic rifle.

Jacob's body is on a bed of flowers; his arm already has signs of being ripped away.

In the far-off distance, a great fire engulfs a city.

The night sky is awash with spaceships rising into the stratosphere.

Jacob's vacant eyes seem as if they watch the ships fly away.

Three closes the boy's eyes.

Then they rip Jacob's leg from its body.

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK:

“SO WE MAY INDULGE IN DEPRAVITY.”

CUT TO:

INT. MANSION - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Prince Menelik enters a white, minimalist hallway from a laundry-room door.

Four stands waiting.

The Prince surveys his surroundings.

A long, corridor to his left.

An entryway to downstairs on his right.

Prince Menelik opens one door.

No one inside.

He steps in.

INT. MANSION - ROOM ON THE LEFT - CONTINUOUS

Looks around.

Opens the bathroom door. Then the closet.

He exits and moves to the next door. Opens it.

INT. MANSION - ROOM ON THE RIGHT - CONTINUOUS

No one stirs.

Prince Menelik opens the closet.

He opens the bathroom and walks inside.

INT. MANSION - ROOM ON THE RIGHT - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

No one’s inside.

Prince Menelik finally sees himself in the mirror.

PRINCE MENELIK’S POV: He sees himself, fully whole.

He looks closer.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: The image of his mangled, bandaged body has returned.

Prince flings everything off the bathroom counter.

He trashes the bathroom, collapses to the floor, and weeps.

CLINK!

Prince Menelik looks out to the hallway.

A mug & saucer sit just outside the bedroom's door frame.

The Prince, blade ready, approaches the items.

INT. MANSION - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

It's tea. The Prince picks it up, smells the aroma. Intoxicating.

He checks the floor. Droplets lead towards the stairs.

The Prince places his blade inside his mouth.

INT. MANSION - DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Prince Menelik descends the winding stairs. He finds himself in a living room. He creeps ahead.

CLOSE ON: The prince's foot causing the slightest of CREAKS as he crosses the threshold parting the living room from kitchen.

EVEN CLOSER ON: An ear perking up. Little fingers bristle above it.

FINGERS (40s), a colossal man, naked except for his undies and a see-through jacket, stands at the kitchen counter turned away.

The Prince can't hide his apprehension; his adversary outclasses him. Twice his size in stature & weight.

Still, he hasn't turned around.

Fingers smiles. Many severed fingers, all differing length and shades, crown his head.

They obscure his eyes and jiggle with his rising cheekbones.

The Prince sits down on the couch, waiting.

CLINK!

FOCUS ON: The Prince’s hand setting down his cup.

CLOSER ON: Finger rubbing his hear, curious, as this happens.

Fingers leans in. Smiles again.

He holds up his cup. Sips. Holds it out once more.

Prince Menelik takes his cup and sips. He immediately takes a long, deep gulp, downing the entire drink.

They both drink until their cups are empty.

Prince Menelik sets down the cup and grabs his blade.

When Fingers hears the scrape of the Prince’s blade lift from the ground, he picks his own up from the counter.

The Prince advances in a guarded stance, the blade extended at his mid-level outwards.

Fingers stands straight up, taking no stance. Just waiting. The Prince continues to inch forward.

Fingers switches his blade from the hand facing the Prince to the one behind him.

Prince Menelik thinks about what he’s just seen.

He bends down, move his blade far from his body, and taps on the floor. Fingers turns to the noise.

The Prince taps on the opposite side. Fingers doesn’t move this time, even if he did hear it.

He transitions to an on-guard stance, like a fencer. Advances.

Fingers switches his blade from back to front. He places the other hand on the counter.

Prince Menelik finds himself in range; his eyes narrow.

PRINCE MENELIK’S POV: Finger’s heart.

Both men hold their breath in this moment.

CLOSE ON: The Prince’s back-foot shifting for added balance before the strike.

CREAK!

Prince Menelik lunges forward with his blade.

Fingers shifts sideways. Prince Menelik's blade tears into his shoulder.

Fingers yells in agony. Pivots. Slices upwards with his usable arm.

PLOP!

CLOSE ON: Prince Menelik's hand, blade still gripped, dropping to the floor.

Prince Menelik reels back in agony, his only hand separated from his body!

He yowls in pain, falls to his knees, and scrambles back.

Fingers smiles. Quickly walks towards the noise with his blade pointed to the floor.

Prince Menelik jumps up. Fingers slashes wildly causing the prince to stumble around furniture and fall.

The bleeding stub hits the ground first. The Prince screams. Fingers slams a foot down one of Prince Menelik's arms, pinning him.

Fingers slashes downwards missing the Prince's head by an inch. The Prince responds with a kick to the crotch!

Fingers keels over. Prince Menelik scrambles away while the behemoth slashes on his way down.

A good, clean slash rips through the Prince's chest. He suppresses the scream, jumps up, wobbly, but finds his strength to run up the stairs.

INT. MANSION – UPSTAIRS HALLWAY – CONTINUOUS

Prince Menelik scrambles backwards up the hallway and runs inside one of the rooms. Fingers maniacally laughs.

INT. MANSION – ROOM ON THE LEFT – CONTINUOUS

He lays his entire body on the doorway, exhausted; in excruciating pain.

CLINK! CLINK! CLINK!

The Prince sticks head out to see Fingers climbing the stairs. He ducks back in, hits the back of his head on the wall in frustration, then looks back out.

The Prince slowly peaks out the doorway. His eyes focus on:

- Fingers holding onto the railing

- His slow, cautionary descent

The Prince thinks for a moment, then...

POW!

He kicks over the vase laying near the door.

CRASH!

Fingers sprints down the hallway. The Prince hides near the doorway and plays dead.

Fingers passes him, not realizing he’s right there. The Prince sneaks out the room.

INT. MANSION - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He gently presses down the door knob with his nubs and slams it shut.

Fingers roars. Rams into the door and flings it open.

Prince Menelik slides into the opposite room.

INT. MANSION - ROOM ON THE RIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Then into...

INT. MANSION - ROOM ON THE RIGHT - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bathroom where his earlier breakdown occurred.

Prince Menelik looks into the mirror, angry.

He starts ramming his head into the mirror.

Over and over and over until it cracks!

CUT TO:

INT. MANSION - ROOM ON RIGHT - AT THE SAME TIME

Fingers stalks through the doors.

His blade raised outwards.

He feels the floor.

Between his fingers; blood.

Fingers moves ahead, into --

INT. MANSION - ROOM ON THE RIGHT - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

He steps inside.

The mirror is broken.

Fingers feels the crushed glass underneath. Winces.

Prince Menelik is nowhere to be seen.

Fingers readies his blade, pokes his wounded hand outwards.

The hand touches...shower curtains.

SLICE!

Fingers rips through the curtains with one swing of the blade, but Prince Menelik is not behind them!

Upwards, Prince Menelik's entire body is perched on the front part of a large niche on the upper level of the shower.

A large piece of glass jutting out from his bleeding mouth, he leaps forward, crashing into Fingers.

Fingers's blade slides away.

CLOSE ON: The shard of glass jutting out of Finger's face. It clips through the crown of fingers directly into where his left eye is hidden underneath.

Fingers lays there -- dead.

Prince Menelik breaths a sigh of relief atop his adversary.

A bloody, thick hand grabs Prince Menelik by the throat. Menelik can't get away.

Fingers, very much alive, slams Prince Menelik's head into the toilet.

DING!

A great GONG, like a thousand shots, pounds through the Prince's head.

Fingers pins the Prince underneath his foot. He smiles and pulls glass shard out of his face.

He raises his crown of fingers to reveal...he never had eyes in the first place. They've been ripped from his skull.

Fingers pushes Prince Menelik face upwards to see 5 scars now remain on the Prince's neck.

Fingers speaks in GAELIC, subtitled:

FINGERS
Desperate. The way you fight. So much hope.

INT. MANSION - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Fingers bursts out of the room with Prince Menelik in a chokehold, pushing him towards the stairs.

The Prince struggles to free himself, but he's know match for his adversary's brute strength.

The two men pass by Four, who simply watches the struggle.

FINGERS
Like you're going home.

They reach the guard-rail.

With all his might and strength, Fingers hoists Prince Menelik's body above him. Finger's wounded arm trembles, dripping out blood.

Fingers roars.

CLOSE ON: His back muscles grimacing.

He throws Prince Menelik from the second floor!

INT. MANSION - DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Prince Menelik crashes into the coffee table below.

He groans in agony amid the crushed glass.

Weakly, the Prince watches Fingers descend the stairs.

Fingers steps on Prince Menelik's severed hand. He reaches down and takes the blade and the hand.

The Prince watches in horror. Fingers cuts the pinky finger off and pushes it into the bone needle protruding from his crown of fingers.

FINGERS
This is just the beginning. Time is of no consequence. Death is an illusion delivered to us through their grace. We are higher beings now. Slaves gifted with the honor to repeat our most base desires, for eternity. We've transcended human possibility. It's beautiful. Think about it. So long as I don't hit any vitals, you'll live. So for the next hundred years, I'm going to skin you alive, piece by piece. I'm going to cut your cock off and feed it to you. Then I'll make you watch me pleasure myself with a delicate cut of your calf. I'm going to cut you up, but never enough to where you don't know what's happening to you. If you pass out. I'll wait. When you wake up. I'll start over. I'll let you heal, keep you safe, and do it all over again. Because it's all a pit of chaos and after I do this to you, I'll never see you again.

Prince Menelik keels over and off the coffee table.

Fingers stomps towards him with his hand out; searching for him.

Prince Menelik reels backwards.

Fingers grabs Prince Menelik by the leg and stabs him in the thigh. The Prince jabs Fingers in the face with his heel.

Fingers falls back, but not before viciously yanking the blade with him.

The Prince screams, but rises to his feet, the adrenaline pumping inside him.

He limps away. This limp turns into a jog. The jog turns into a sprint.

CLOSE ON: Prince Menelik's face heaving with all his might.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

CRASH!

Prince Menelik's soars through the air, shards of glass following him.

His body disappears beneath the hedges.

INT. MANSION - DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Fingers steps up to the broken glass.

The body-length window separating interior from exterior is shattered.

Fingers writhes, the pain taking him to his knees. He clasps his eyes to bear the pain.

CLOSE ON: The two scars left on Walker's neck slither violently until they disappear.

The pain subsides and Fingers removes his crown to reveal his fully regrown eyes.

He peers down to see Prince Menelik's dead body, laid out in the backyard's empty pool.

Blood and tears trickles from the Prince's head.

Fingers turns to find all of The Seven waiting in the den and kitchen.

Four walks downstairs, heads into the kitchen, and open's a closet door.

Sunshine radiates into the dour atmosphere.

Fingers steps into the light.

Beyond the closet door's bounds...

INT. FINGER'S DOOR - CONTINUOUS

A WOMAN, her head always turned away from Fingers, waits at a dining room table.

TWO CHILDREN run to her, excitedly, pulling her up and away.

INT. MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Fingers wipes away unexpected tears, spits on the ground.

FINGERS
Meaningless delusion.

The Seven look at each other, but do not respond.

Fingers steps inside the closet door. Four closes it.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ALTAR OF FLOWERS - DAWN

One of the Seven's hands reaches in, slices the ceremonial bandages away from the Prince's body, and rips his leg off.

PUSH IN ON: The Prince's head.

One of the Prince's eyes flitters open.

Prince Menelik's POV: The red, swirling dot rests in the heavens, with the stars.

The Prince can hear his own heart beating and thumping. The swirling, red dot, no...star, thumps in unison.

The Prince's eyes close once again.

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK:

"HOW WE SNEER AT BLOOD SOAKED MIRRORS."

CUT TO:

INT. INFINITY CUBE - NIGHT

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: His eyes jolt open to see infinite versions of himself.

The Prince's prison is four, cramped mirrored walls expanding into multiple reflections within reflections.

The Prince's watches his many reflections with awe.

He touches the top. He can barely raise his shoulders.

He feels the glass underneath him. Thin.

He moves his body. The glass grumbles. Ready to break.

CLOSE ON: His hand slips into a crack.

Prince Menelik, lost in his thoughts, finally looks forward.

MIRROR, wrapped in white, ceremonial bandages, missing the exact same body parts as the Prince, sits in front of him.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: Mirror's hand already touching their blade.

The Prince looks down at his own blade, a quick swipe away.

Prince Menelik and Mirror stare for a moment.

The Prince reaches for his blade!

Mirror stabs, connecting with the Prince's stomach. Mirror keeps stabbing!

The Prince screams, then slams the butt of the blade into the crack.

The glass BREAKS!

INT. CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM - NIGHT

Glass rains down from the mirrored walls of the infinity cube, an art installation piece rotating in the center of the museum.

Prince Menelik and Mirror tumble downwards in mid-air.

FOCUS ON: Prince Menelik's foot hitting the ground. His ankle twisting in a horrific fashion.

The Prince's blade slides across the room until it rests underneath an impressively large painting.

The Prince writhes in pain on the floor. He looks down at his stomach, blood trickling from his wound.

Five, the next god, waits in a corner across the room as if they're the museum's staff.

Mirror, awaking from his own stupor, sets his sights back towards the Prince. He stands upright, but stumbles.

He's limping...and his right arm is twisted backwards, useless.

Mirror limps as fast as he can towards his injured prey.

Prince Menelik turns his attention back to spot where his blade slid.

He starts pulling his body, with all his might, towards his weapon.

Mirror speeds up!

Absolutely unwilling to allow his adversary the benefit of a weapon in this situation.

Prince Menelik grabs the hilt of his blade, but cries out in silent pain.

He spins his head around to see Mirror’s blade jutting out of his leg.

Mirror menaces over him.

The Prince kicks!

He pushes the heel of his functioning foot into the leg Mirror’s been setting the majority of his weight onto; he hits the ground head-first.

The THUD from Mirror’s face echoes through the museum hallways.

Mirror grabs his face with an acute agony. Like a headache smacked him in the collision.

Prince Menelik limps upright by using the wall near him to keep the pressure off his broken ankle.

He jams his blade into the space between the paintings outward edges and the wall.

He creates space, using the blade to slowly push the painting off its hinges.

Mirror shakes off his momentary stupor to look up and see the painting thundering down upon him.

The painting flattens Mirror underneath it.

The only thing Prince Menelik can see is the smashed-in outline of the man underneath.

He flips his blade around so he can strike the moment he’s close enough.

Then, he pull his himself towards the unmoving outline with his elbow. He scrapes forward.

Mirror’s blade frantically thrusts upwards through the painting’s thick hide.

He knows if he can’t escape, this is it. Frantic PANTS heave and ho underneath the painting as Prince Menelik aims his blade carefully.

RIP!

Mirror’s blade thrust upwards straight into Prince Menelik’s throat.

Our Prince grasps for life, the blood spurting and dripping from his lips.

Prince Menelik, with all the might left in his body, slams his blade into Mirror’s neck.

The blade splits through the hide of the painting.

The Prince’s own neck digs deeper into Mirror’s blade.

He gasps with no sound.

Blood drips down from Prince Menelik’s neck.

Blood from Mirror’s neck seeps into the painting’s hide, even as his arm shakes and spasms in the last few breaths left within him.

Finally, Mirror’s grip on his blade weakens.

His hand falls away. Dead first.

In the same moment, Menelik slumps to the floor.

He stops moving, the second one to die.

Five walks over to the carnage; a masterful, blood-soaked spectacle of installation art.

Five taps their staff and...

Prince Menelik’s eyes roar back to life!

He sputters out blood because the knife’s still lodged in his neck.

He grabs the blade with his hands and pulls.

The blade’s coming out slow. So slow. Every moment is a struggle.

The Prince collapses into a heap and looks up to see an uncaring Five, bent down, watching him struggle.

He grips the blade again and pulls!

Blood sputters and spits on the cloth obscuring Five's face.

The Prince can't do it. His head falls back to the floor.

Our Prince, once again, dies. Five taps his staff!

And he comes back to life a frothing messing.

In the wild, scared eyes of Prince Menelik, he's realized at least one thing...he'll keep bringing him back to life until he pulls this blade from his neck.

He grabs the blade once more. Pulls!

In the Prince's struggle, a phenomena occurs.

FOCUS ON: Underneath the ceremonial bandages and protruding through them, coagulating into existence, is Prince Menelik's mouth.

For the first time, as the blade's tip exits his neck, the Prince screams out.

We can audibly hear his shrill, deep, agonizing voice between spurts of dribbling blood.

An echoing cry, guttural and visceral, packing in all the murder and sorrow he's endured so far.

He collapses from the effort, completely spent.

PRINCE MENELIK
Aah...ahh.

Try as he might, no words form. He takes his hands and fishes inside his mouth.

FOCUS ON: Only the nub of his ripped out tongue remains.

As his move away from his emaciated mouth, he feels his neck. The skin regrows and covers the blade's marks.

Five walks away from the scene, disappearing down the hallway.

The Prince picks up his blade and starts crawling after Five.

He leaves a trail of blood behind him.

A ROOM DOWN THE HALLWAY.

A white, spacious, softly lit room.

Prince Menelik crawls up to the entryway leading inside.

Spotlights lead all the way to the back of the room where a set of sliding doors, like the one's you'd see at any suburban house leading to the backyard, have been installed.

Five stands by the sliding doors with his staff, waiting.

The Prince crawls towards Five. Each spotlight brightens as he pulls himself towards the sliding doors.

He reaches the back of the room and peers at the sliding door's tinted glass. He can't see anything past them.

He looks to Five, who touches their chest and holds out their hand.

Prince Menelik looks down at his chest. The blood's still fresh.

He pushes his hand into his bandages then takes Five's hand.

Five rubs the blood into the creases of his fingers then smears it on the sliding door handle.

FOCUS ON: The Eternal Knot of Infinity writhing into existence on the smeared blood.

Five moves away from the sliding doors to allow access.

The Prince crawls up to the door handle, unlatches the handle, and pushes.

The sliding door's heavy and unwieldy. Continuing to hold his blade makes the mission harder.

He throws his blade to the ground, then continues to push.

He strains with all his might to push it open until it creaks and screams wide open.

The sudden jolt of the door opening sends him tumbling to the ground between the world of the art museum...and the concrete underneath him.

CLOSE ON: Five's staff hitting the ground and a HUM filling the air.

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK:

“FIND ABSOLUTION THROUGH NECESSITY.”

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE WITH A POOL - BACKYARD - DAY

The Prince feels the pavement underneath him, then up.

It’s a prototypical 2000s era back-yard in Los Angeles.

A ton of equipment for the beach that’s never used all around the backyard entrance.

A few bikes packed onto the brick wall.

Further up on, perched on the wall, watching something --

Six, its entire upper body lazily propped. They look down at the Prince, acknowledging him for a moment, then looking back to whatever has their attention.

The Prince’s eyes lock onto a cane jutting out of one of the boxes.

He crawls over, grabs it, and props himself up.

Finally looking backwards, he sees the sliding doors.

Now they’re just regular, nothing noteworthy about them.

They lead into a normal house’s living room and further in, its mundane kitchen.

The SOUND of SOMEONE moving makes him pivot his attention to the rest of the backyard obscured by the pileup of family gems and trinkets of whoever lived here.

The Prince peeks through a rack to see who he’s facing.

PREACHER, 80s, southern baptist robes, the sleeves of his robes armless, struggles to stand up on his own.

An easy kill...the Prince ponders this, before looking down.

His blade is waiting on the rack right underneath.

He bites into the hilt and hobbles away from the junk obscuring his path to the preacher.

The Preacher quietly sobs, his head digging into the pavement, scratching off his own skin.

A pool stands between the two men.

The Prince sees the preacher's blade; it's near him, teetering on the pool's edge

Preacher speaks in SPANISH, subtitled:

PREACHER
I served him. I followed his every word.

The cane pushes the priest's blade into the pool.

It drifts all the way to the bottom.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
Every scripture I prayed over, begging for his insight and guidance. So I could tend to his flock. Bring every man, woman, and child to his light. I dedicated my life, my heart, my soul...so why am I here?

There's smatters of blood and guts on the priest's shoes and pants.

Prince Menelik's focus stays on this.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
I shouldn't be here.

Logan directs his fury at Six.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
I shouldn't be here!

Six does not react to the Preacher's forlorn declaration.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
Even his messengers ignore our cries.

The Preacher wobbles to his feet.

The Prince steadies himself on his cane, ready to pounce at moment's notice if the preacher turns violent.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
Please. I need this time to be on my own terms.

The cane points to the preacher, then to the pool.

The Preacher laughs before shuffling up to the pool's edge.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
God's abandoned us. All of us. This is our collective punishment.

Prince Menelik takes a step to end the babbling.

The Preacher holds his hand up.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
Give me a moment.

He looks at his reflection, hesitates, then closes his eyes.

The Preacher's body plunges into the water.

Our Prince makes his way to the pool's edge.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: The Preacher floating to the bottom of the pool.

At first, the Preacher looks serene, a figure more symbolic to drowning, than one truly experiencing it.

That soon changes. His eyes light up with fear. He starts thrashing, helpless to save himself.

The two men's eyes connect. One dying, one the victor.

The Preacher contorted face pleads for rescue.

The Prince keeps the eye connection, witnessing his opponents desperation.

Finally, with all his might pushing him to witness, the Prince averts his eyes.

Then a RINGING echoes through his body. The sensation is unbearable.

Prince Menelik falls to the ground.

He covers where his ear should be with the one lone hand.

Through the creases of his hands.

CLOSE ON: His ears materializing into existence underneath the bandages.

The SLOSH of water overtakes his senses.

For a moment, the Prince feels this serene calm, and profound feeling -- as if it was the first time he's truly heard -- truly appreciated the comfort of sound.

Moments pass. The Prince opens his eyes.

He crawls over to the edge of the pool.

The Preacher's body floats in the water, lifeless.

Seeing this, Prince Menelik gets up to his feet, hobbles over to a poolside chair, and collapses into it.

He looks up to the sky. The bandages can't hide the trauma.

The Prince's eyes well up with tears.

He keeps wiping them away, but they just keep coming.

The Prince closes his eyes to stop the outpouring. Exhaustion takes over, and finally...he falls asleep.

MONTAGE:

- **FOCUS ON THE PRINCE'S FACE:** The bright, glare of the sun transitions to the pale glow of the moon. This transition happens repeatedly, signifying the change of time.

- **IN THE SKY:** The sun and moon rise. Blue skies become starry nights, starry nights become blue skies.

- The sun dips below the horizon, granting sunset.

- The sun peaks over the horizon, granting sunrise.

MONTAGE ENDS.

Six raps their staff on the ground three times.

The chair underneath the Prince's body disappears. He crashes to the ground with a thud, barely reacting.

Six points their staff towards the backyard's front gate.

CLOSE ON: The Eternal Knot of Infinity slithering into existence on the gate handle.

The Prince looks that way as he pulls himself up with the cane.

He walks over to the pool and looks down. The Preacher's body is gone.

He continues past the pool till he stands toe to toe with Six. The arbitrator dwarves him.

Prince Menelik, injured and frail, bows as much as he can.

The Prince raises his blade!

CLOSE ON: And thrusts the point into his chest. Methodically, but crudely, carving the Eternal Knot of Infinity into his chest.

He keeps eye contact with Six. He throws the blade down, smears his own hand across the wound, and then smears it across Six's chest.

Then, he heads in the opposite direction of Six.

In front of him, the back-gate, chain and locked. The brick wall obscures any view into the alleyway behind.

As the Prince wobbles towards his own choosing, Six, for the first time, reacts.

They turn to watch the Prince's defiance.

And the Prince...he grabs the chain and yanks!

He does so again and again, each time putting more of his body into it. Thrashing.

Six watches the spectacle. They track their hands through the blood smeared across their chest.

Six walks up behind the Prince, who finally stops his thrashing to turn his head back.

Six, once again, points his staff towards the appropriate exit. The Prince glares at Six with disdain then turns back to pulling at the chains.

The chain's digging into his skin, leaving cuts and marks, the more he pulls.

Six continues to watch. The Prince yanks and flails.

His muscles bulge. His eyes flair. He throws his entire body into it, until --

CLOSE ON: One of the chain's link, ever so slightly, bending.

It's barely anything. A tiny, minuscule break that means nothing to the rest of the chains.

Yet -- Six's entire being focuses in on the grand defiance.

Six taps his staff.

The next pull from the Prince sends the chains flying off the back-door. They hit the floor, the Eternal Knot of Infinity still smoldering on the chain's lock.

The Prince and Six share a moment of silence; a path has been chosen.

Prince Menelik rubs his chaffed, bruised hand against the grass and picks up his blade.

He grabs hold of the door handle and opens it.

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK:

"ABANDON ALL PRETENSE OF ILLUSION."

CUT TO:

EXT. A HOUSE ON A HILL - DUSK

A multi-story family house surrounded by a great, thick, ivory wall.

As far as the eye can see, the house and its acres are perfectly sequestered from the riff-raff of the world.

Prince Menelik tumbles to the ground, the cane now gone, as the rusty front-gate swings outward.

He pushes himself up with his blade.

His hand grabs the gate when it swings back to him.

He looks up to his destination, a pathway of gravel and dirt leading to the house.

His attention turns to a tree near the front of the estate.

Prince Menelik hops over and eyes a branch not too far off from the ground.

He steadies himself, jumps, and grips.

He shakes until it SNAPS!

The Prince hits the ground with a thump, grabs his blade, and starts cutting into the branch.

It breaks off. He carves the very end into a fine point.

He pulls at the bandages near his thigh. As he pulls, the SCHLICK of gooey, crusted skin peels upwards.

The Prince winces before pushing the blade between the ceremonial bandages.

He hoists himself up with the sharpened branch, beginning his descent up the gravel road until he reaches the steps of the family house.

The front door's slightly open.

He leans on the window near the front, the insides obscured by curtains.

He takes the branch and pushes the door ajar.

CRASH!

An arrow breaks through the glass and hits the Prince in the shoulder. He yells and falls to the ground.

Through the window's broken glass and torn curtains --

ARCHER (50s), a woman with fiercely honed, muscular arms. She's in a wheelchair, her legs covered.

Archer's already aiming.

ARCHER (O.S.)
I don't miss.

The Prince muffles his screams. Tries to calm down.

ARCHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I know there's someone out there you care about. Someone you're doing this for. And you'll do anything to see them again. I know that. I feel the same way. I wanna see my husband and hit that fucker in the face for leaving the cabinet open every single time he goes into the kitchen. I wanna grab my kids' face and just kiss them, just keep kissing them until they throw the covers over their face cuz they're sick of me. I want to see my Mom, my Dad...I want to tell them I'm so sorry for ignoring their calls. I could've seen them. I had time.
(MORE)

ARCHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I always had time, but acted like I didn't.

He screams as the pain hits before grabbing the arrow and ripping it out of his back.

ARCHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
All those chances. I want them back. I didn't ask to be here. None of us did.

Prince Menelik pulls his blade from his bandages. Still, those last words, they make him stop for a moment.

ARCHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'll do anything to go back. So please, die quietly.

He pulls himself as close as he can to the door then props himself up using the branch.

Prince Menelik cuts off a portion of the branch.

He throws it through the window.

An arrow slings through it.

ARCHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It won't work!

The Prince points to the spot in the air where the arrow and branch met.

He traces it back to a few inches from the door's beam.

Readies himself by placing the branch underneath the nub of his stolen arm.

ARCHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I said it won't work!

Prince Menelik flips into the door way.

INT. A HOUSE ON A HILL - CONTINUOUS

The inside of the home is warm like your Grandmother's cottage.

There's blankets on each portion of the couch. A Christmas tree with a bevy of presents underneath. This is a house built red touch of love in aesthetic and spirit.

The Prince slings his blade.

An arrow flies out of Archer’s bow.

The arrow hits the Prince dead in his chest. He gasps!

Archer screams!

The Prince looks down at his chest to see the arrow embedded in his chest.

He falls back on the door’s walls and looks up to see --

The blade in Archer’s stomach. She’s reaching for another arrow.

The quiver she’s pulling from, strapped to the wheelchair, holds only a few arrows.

He grabs the branch and stomps towards her as fast as he can.

Splinters burst into the air!

Another arrow juts out of the branch. He keeps pressing forward.

She shoots again. Straight into his stomach, but he doesn’t slow down.

Another shot.

His thigh! He screams and keeps pushing ahead. She takes the next arrow and aims downwards.

It hits the branch at the perfect angle.

He tumbles to the floor and starts crawling like a mad man towards her.

She preps another shot as he closes in.

It goes straight through his mouth and juts out from his mouth --

Right as the Prince juts out his hand and pushes the blade in, deeper.

Archer wails the cry of a mother, forlorn as the blood leaks out.

The Prince finally feels everything he’s done. How much it truly hurts. And he keels over.

But not before grabbing the cover over Archer’s legs, revealing they’ve both been taken from her.

Seven observes everything from the stairs.

FOCUS ON: The dead eyes of the Prince and Archer.

Archer is slumped over in their chair.

Prince Menelik is laid out on the floor.

Seven taps their staff.

A HUM fills the air.

A BEAT, then -- Archer's eyes open.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ALTAR OF FLOWERS - DAY

Thick smoke fills the air. Citizen SCREAM and WAIL.

The silhouette of frenzied fire fills the atmosphere with foreboding.

A hand peels apart the bandages obscuring Prince Menelik's eyes. It twitches and reels in all directions, as if caught in its own personal, eldritch madness.

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: The red dot from before...as he wretches his vision into the sky, he can see its most current form. A great, red festering comet descending towards his homeland.

The Prince's heart beats and throbs in fear of the inevitable. And the comet's crimson glare thumps with him.

CLOSE ON: The same hand pulling down the bandages around one of his ears.

QUEEN SHEBA (O.S.)
(in Awngi, subtitled)
Release him! Release my son!
They'll die without him!

His eye flares up! Enraged, but he is completely powerless.

One's silhouette appears over the Prince's view.

They peel the ceremonial bandages away from his neck to see...

Four scars left.

The cloth attached to One's crown obscuring their face wafts ever slightly to reveal a wide-toothed, wry smile. Like all of this is a simple, inevitable game.

They stick their fingers into the Prince's socket then rip his eyeball out.

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK:

"ABANDON ALL PRETENSE OF HOPE."

CUT TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Six throws Prince Menelik's body into the corner space between the garbage cans and the hallway moviegoers turn into before you enter the main theater.

The Prince barely budges, but he opens his one, bloodshot eye to stare at Six.

Prince Menelik maniacally shouting at Six! Stopping and starting. He stops and thumps his hand on the crappy, felt carpeting.

The Prince points at him as he pulls himself up on the corner wall.

He pulls himself up.

Prince Menelik spits blood and pus in Six's face. He lunges at them. Six grabs the Prince by the face and throws him back into the ground.

They set their staff on the wall, look at Prince Menelik in a show of dominance.

They walk over to the garbage can, reach in, and throws the Prince's blade at his foot.

Six points to the hallway. Go!

And the Prince...he, broken and confused, bows.

Underneath, his face to the floor...we can see the Prince seething. His whole body wishing supreme violence upon the deity before him.

He pulls himself up and moves further inside the movie theater.

Prince Menelik, with his blade in hand, looks up to see the projector playing black and white footage.

A SERIES OF SHOTS ON SCREEN.

MONTAGE:

- MEN, lined up on walls, shot.

= CHILDREN, on the sides of roads, starving.

- SOLDIERS shooting at fleeing WOMEN and CHILDREN.

- A NUCLEAR BLAST.

- Soldiers torching homes.

- OFFICERS shooting a fleeing VICTIM.

- The SPED UP construction of a skyscraper.

- HELICOPTER TURRETS raining down gunfire!

- BOMBS falling from the barrel of a PLANE.

- Victims shot into shallow graves.

- A great, beautiful, gleaming shot of the AMERICAN FLAG.

MONTAGE ENDS:

An assortment of clips of American war crimes caught on camera play across the screen, a constant stream of it engulfing the Prince’s body as he moves towards the movie screen’s stage, because on the other side of it --

REMY (16), skinny and frail, missing an arm, their entire visible body marked in tribal tattoos, hides behind the theater’s curtains.

He’s frozen in fear. The Prince can feel it in his eyes.

The Prince chucks his blade at the boy. It misses!

Remy screams as the blade cuts through the curtains dropping his own blade.

The boy’s confused at their opponent’s apparent display of defenselessness.

He kicks the Prince’s blade as far away as he can.

Remy speaks in the language, TAMIL, subtitled:

REMY
Please forgive me for this injustice.

The boy's body can barely help but convulse as he carefully steps towards the Prince, so unsure of his steps.

Prince Menelik's eyes express sadness. So obvious...this child so unaccustomed to death.

Remy is hair's breadth away from the Prince. The boy extends his blade like a novice. To scare away, rather than extension of himself.

Prince Menelik grabs the tip of blade. Remy gasps. The Prince yanks it from him and throws it into the empty crowd.

The Prince's pinky and index finger roll off the stage.

He yanks Remy to the floor with him.

Climbs atop the flailing teenager.

Remy delivers hits and scratches all over the Prince, but it doesn't faze him. He knows what he's here to do.

Limbs or not, Prince Menelik's clearly the aggressor in weight and want.

Remy stops fighting. Tears rolls down his eyes.

They look away. Awaiting. Trembling.

REMY (CONT'D)
My name is Remy, son of Attun & Laha. And I, yield myself to the will of the gods.

Remy breaks down, crying.

REMY (CONT'D)
My father spoke of men like you. Violent men. Warriors. Something I could never be. Too frail. Too weak as I am. These arms never took muscle. And my legs, they never took flight like my brother. So I learned to make bread, like my mother, so I could be something for us. But what I did meant nothing, when the gods...when they chose my brother.
(MORE)

REMY (CONT'D)
And Mom and Dad...son, give yourself. Volunteer. Your brother is strong and brave. He must live! He must go to war in the name of our family, our house, our tribe. Do this for everyone. Do this to bring fortune from the gods.

The Prince doesn't respond. Just listens.

REMY (CONT'D)
But how could I know! I pushed down that feeling, the feeling of everything becoming a final blur as your life ends, only for it to begin anew.

Remy wipes away the tears.

REMY (CONT'D)
It hurts when you die. You feel everything. Hot. Searing. So much...everything until it all stops. It's black. There's nothing. No sound. No screams. You're there and not there. And you have to make someone else feel this way. Over and over. Or they'll do it to you. I hate it. It feels evil. Doesn't it? If there is where we end in the great oblivion...I wish to have only known non-existence.

The Prince looks down at the boy. The decision awaiting.

For this moment, the light of the projector shines down on him, a plethora of violent images washing over his bandages and flesh.

He closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

<u>EXT. ALTAR OF FLOWERS - DAY - FLASHBACK</u>

QUEEN SHEBA (O.S.)
Release him! Release my son! They'll die without him!

One's silhouette appears over the Prince's view. Their face wafts ever slightly to reveal a wide-toothed, wry smile.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Prince's Menelik's bleeding hand squeezes down on Remy's neck.

The boy cries and struggles.

But the Prince's muscle. His physique.

His power...it's too much, even in his damaged state.

The Prince looks away, but Remy grabs him by the face and turns him back.

Forces him to make eye contact, to look at what he's doing.

Until Remy passes away.

The Prince releases the young boy's neck and reels backwards.

He spits in the air, lets it hit himself and shakes.

Six walks onto the theater's stage as the movie projector runs out of film.

CLOSE ON: Six beginning to raise their staff when --

A RED CLOTH, taught and textured like the ceremonial bandages, covers Prince Menelik's body.

And the Prince's head EXPLODES underneath the cloth.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. THE ALTAR OF FLOWERS - NIGHT

The great, flaming comet is nowhere to be seen in the sky, as many times shown before.

Instead, each of The Seven lay across the altar, as if asleep, red cloths covering each of their faces.

INCARNATE, androgynous, in long, graceful red robes, a red cloth held up by a red crown.

They cradle Prince Menelik's desiccated body.

And touch his face.

Images infest the Prince's mind.

EXT. SPACE - TWILIGHT

The great, red comet swirling in space.

INT. LABORATORY - NIGHT

Sterile and white.

A TINY RED EMBRYO, sleeping inside a test tube, latched into a machine with an assortments of wires and tubes exuding from it. The machine's parts, like a great locomotive, churn.

CLOSE ON: PROJECT INCARNATE emblazoned on the label.

A giant screen quickly flies through reams of information at a thousand pictures per second in front of the embryo.

EXT. SPACE - TWILIGHT

THE EARTH, engulfed in a solar flare, burning.

INT. LABORATORY - NIGHT

MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN pull machine-mounts over their heads. Fluids flow from their tubes, into Tiny Red Embryo's testing tube.

EXT. SPACE - NIGHT

Then --

SPACESHIPS, floating past the planet, Pluto.

And later, much later...eons later...

The same spaceships, derelict and destroyed, all humanity inside them dead.

Atop the largest one, Incarnate, sitting, gazing...

At a black hole before them.

The Seven appear before Incarnate.

One, holds out their hand.

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK:

“WE ARE THE GOD YOU SEEK.”

CUT TO:

INT. RED ROOM - DAY

A large room with red walls.

Prince Menelik, at one end of the room, rises from a pool of blood.

His face and body are fully intact. No bandages, bruises, or missing skin. He is the pristine himself from the beginning of our journey.

At the end of the room, Incarnate awaits. The Prince heads towards them.

The entire conversation between the Prince and Incarnate happens inside their minds.

The Prince speaks in the Central Cushitic language, Awngi, SUBTITLED:

PRINCE MENELIK (V.O.)
I am Prince Menelik of Saba. Heir of the shining sun, Makeda. Seed of Progeny of the philosopher king, Jedidiah. I am my people’s champion. A warrior unafraid of his duty to the wanting and needy. For them, I entered the Eternal Knot of Infinity. To ensure the prosperity of our kingdom, I gave my body and soul.

Incarnate’s voice is comprised of many voices in ENGLISH: men, women, and children. It resonates from everywhere and no where all at once.

INCARNATE (V.O.)
I am an embryo grown in the fluids of the collective human consciousness at the end of humanity’s existence. A store of all mankind’s history and information made flesh incarnate before the stars die. As the last human to exist, we entered the Eternal Knot of Infinity as an honored guest, to escape the solitude of oneness and experience the very last remnants of man.

PRINCE MENELIK (V.O.)
An honored guest does not mingle with prisoners.

INCARNATE (V.O.)
Whether by choice or design, we are both welcomed and confined by something greater.

PRINCE MENELIK (V.O.)
You’re one of them.

INCARNATE (V.O.)
You may bow.

PRINCE MENELIK (V.O.)
I heard you calling out to me.

INCARNATE (V.O.)
All humans who enter the knot are my kin. I hope to embody you all.

PRINCE MENELIK (V.O.)
Tell me what it really is...the path that binds me. This perpetual web that’s soaked me in blood. The gods who sent me here. What are they?

INCARNATE (V.O.)
Those seven who reside outside the reason of men...where they come from, how they live outside the limits of possibility, I have no answer. What I do know...is what I saw...and I saw them looking at it...the end of everything.

INT. WHITE HALLWAY - DAY

A minimalist, white hallway with only one door open.

Incarnate, now a young child, draped in all red robes, their face obscured under a shawl of the same color runs into hallway.

Their robes flow in deep contrast to the stark, sterile white. Incarnate ends up at a door.

INCARNATE (V.O.)
We wonder if they let us, so we know the inevitable.

They look inside.

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

A room with white walls and a projector. Each of the Seven, on white thrones, watch.

ON SCREEN:

EXT. SPACE - NIGHT

The stars, like a great canvas painting, shimmer. One by one, they fade away.

INCARNATE (V.O.)
The stars will die. But what after? When the dark matter dissipates and scatters. When even time cedes to nothingness. I think even they, who proceed beyond dimension and reason to us, cannot escape the grand march to oblivion.

Until the darkness of nothing fills the screen.

FADE TO:

INT. RED ROOM - MORNING

Prince Menelik trudges forward.

INCARNATE (V.O.)
So they frolic here, where the strands of causality intersect. Where time and space fold before the great quiet, in a festival of experience, tangling and detangling reality to their delight.

Prince Menelik’s overwhelmed by the wealth of knowledge.

PRINCE MENELIK (V.O.)
What of my people?

INCARNATE (V.O.)
Slaughtered. Broken without your rallying cry. The ground of Saba is burned and salted. Your empire and its people relegated to tale and myth.

(MORE)

INCARNATE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Your efforts to return to your people will ultimately mean nothing. You will die as a monster, broken by this realm and the one you so desperately wish to return to. All for a final, great comedy.

PRINCE MENELIK (V.O.)
Lies! Lies! Did I sacrifice myself for nothing? If my people were but a feast for the god's doom! Then what was the point of it all! Why? Why do I even keep fighting. You must be lying. I know you're lying. The gods...the gods, we prosper in their foresight. Century after century my people sacrificed! Bled and died for the great calm that all crave from peace!? Was it all predestined? Our giving unnecessary. Do you call the gods mere leaches? You are nothing but a false prophet, sent to test my faith. I'll please the gods. I'll return to my people. I'll kiss my mother on her cheek and speak of my triumph. I'll meet my father as his equal. And the Kingdom of Saba will not stand for a century...it will flourish for a thousand years.

He fights back the tears holding him together.

PRINCE MENELIK (V.O.)
Why tell me any of this if it is already written?

The Prince finally reaches Incarnate. They take his hand and place something in it.

INCARNATE (V.O.)
Because I want to give you a gift.

FOCUS ON: A necklace; at its very end, the Eternal Knot of Infinity has been beautifully carved and dipped in the deepest of reds.

INCARNATE (V.O.)
It'll always be there, inside you, teaming with the power of actuation. The moment you lose faith...call out to me. And I'll give it to you.

Prince Menelik and Incarnate share this quiet, intimate moment until...

CUT TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Six pulls away the red cloth obscuring Prince Menelik and Remy's corpse.

The Prince looks at himself in shock. He checks his entire body. He's regained every limb and appendage.

He glances up at Six who paces around the Prince, seemingly perplexed.

Finally, Six let's it go and points to the back of the theater.

The Prince makes his way past the curtains to the theater's backdoor, the exit sign flickering on and off.

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK:

"LIFE IS MEANINGLESS."

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Prince Menelik steps out the door of a water-mill deep in the woods.

He pulls his bandages down to reveal **one scar left.**

A HORRID CRY in the distance catches his attention.

The Prince sees his blade jutting from the water-mill's door.

He plucks it out.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

The SCREAMS lead the Prince one step closer to his goals.

He walks through acres of cut down trees.

Heavy bulldozing gear is scattered across the landscape of uprooted soil.

EXT. DEEPER INSIDE THE FOREST - LATER

Near a foggy waterfall.

A TRIBUTE, completely bandaged-up, weeps.

The Prince advances.

He sees Tribute is missing their eyes, nose, legs, and an arm.

They're almost a mirror-image of the Prince's beginning predicament.

The Prince bends down to see blood trailing down the rocky borders of waterfall.

He glances up to see the steep drop off.

Tribute gasps with every breath.

The Prince checks Tribute's sides. Soaked in blood. The fall wasn't fatal, but it was enough.

The Prince looks at his blade, then tosses it to the ground.

He gets on his knees and bows to Tribute.

Then, Prince Menelik lifts Tribute.

Tribute yelps in pain. They try to push him away, but Tribute is far too weak.

He places Tribute in a comfortable position beneath a tree, then fetches them water.

The Prince helps them drink. Tribute takes slight sips from his hand, before collapsing on the roots of the tree.

He goes for more water, but Tribute panics, reaching their hand out.

Prince Menelik takes it. Tribute weakly grips the only thing that makes sense to them in this horrible world.

Tears spill through the bandages. Eyes or not, they tell a story of pain and suffering.

The Prince doesn't let go of Tribute's hand.

Their grip softens, then falls to the wayside.

Tribute stops moving.

CLOSE ON: A thunderous chorus of pounding staffs.

A great HUM fills the air.

Prince Menelik looks behind him.

The Seven have appeared, alongside a door.

One, Prince Menelik's beating heart in hand, steps forward.

CLOSE ON: Their finger tracing down the Prince's chest. His skin and meat slick open like a surgical knife making an incision. One's hand digs into his chest, placing the heart back where it belongs.

One turns to Four. Stares them down. Finally, Four looks away and places the upper portion of the Prince Menelik's tongue in their hand.

One turns back and pushes it inside the Prince's mouth.

The black, ceremonial bandages unravel. They fall to the ground in bundles until --

Prince Menelik is fully made whole. No bandages.

He feels his neck. No scars.

The other arbitrators line up on either side of the door. Three one side, three on the other.

One takes their place by the door and opens it.

Between the door's open frame:

The Prince's cabin. Queen Sheba patiently waits on the cabin's porch, watching the sea.

The Prince looks on in disbelief.

EXT. THE PRINCE'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Queen Sheba lets out a cry of join.

QUEEN SHEBA
(in Awngi, subtitled)
Prince? Prince!

She steps off the porch and starts running.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

He hobbles towards the door, this gate to his home.

His eyes well up. It's real.

Prince Menelik falls to his knees and bows with deep, cathartic reverence.

PRINCE MENELIK
(in Awngi, subtitled)
Forgive me for my wavering heart.

One points to the door. *Go through it.*

The Prince exits to salvation.

EXT. THE PRINCE'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

His feet hit the soft, white sand.

He waves to Queen Sheba, who's still running towards the shore.

He goes from a slow walk, to a pace, and then to a run.

All the pain and hurt fading away from his body and face.

He smiles! Truly smiles!

PRINCE MENELIK'S POV: As he races towards his mother...his eyesight...**GOES BLACK.**

The Prince topples to the ground.

He feels his eyes...they're gone.

Then he feels it...his nose is missing.

The Prince screams out...

PRINCE MENELIK
Mo--

But shudders when no sound emits.

He hobbles to his feet...now with a missing left arm.

QUEEN SHEBA
Prince! My --

Queen Sheba's voice, and the sounds of his home, stop.

The Prince now feels for his missing ears.

And then he drops out of frame!

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

Into the kitchen of the fast food restaurant where he first began the path.

One, stands at the same door they did in the beginning.

The Prince feels for his legs. Gone.

He grabs at his neck and pulls at his ceremonial wrappings. All ten of his scars have returned.

The Prince spasms and shakes and finally...snaps.

He beats and sways violently about, his sanity lost.

Cain, the very first challenger, crawls towards the broken Prince with his blade in hand.

He holds it up and STABS Prince Menelik in the chest.

The Prince lets out a silent, shrill cry and dies.

One taps their staff.

A HUM fills the air...the UNSEEN CHORUS singing continues.

MONTAGE:

INT/EXT. THE ALTAR OF FLOWERS & VARIOUS LOCATIONS

- One of the Seven's long, thick hands ripping the Prince's arm away at the Altar of Flowers.

- **CLOSE ON:** HUMAN HANDS with the ceremonial blade slitting the Prince's throat inside a CONVENIENCE STORE.

- They crack open his ribs and pull out his intestines.

- **CLOSE ON:** The Prince stabbed in the chest near a HIGHWAY.

- They take out his lungs.

- **CLOSE ON:** Hands chocking him to death inside a LAUNDROMAT.

- Then the liver.

- **CLOSE ON:** The Prince stabbed through the back at a PARK.

- Spleen

- **CLOSE ON:** BLOODY FISTS hit the Prince over and over in the customer section of an OPERA HOUSE.

- Stomach

- **CLOSE ON:** The blade thrusting into the Prince's gut in a PARKING LOT.

- Kidneys

- In SLOW MOTION, a ceremonial blade rises into the air. The clear sky its backdrop.

- The greedy hands of the Seven disrespectfully pluck, grab, and plunder the Prince's innards. Vacating his insides of anything and everything...until he's nothing but a head and husk of a body.

- The ceremonial blade's steel glints as it crosses path with the sun. The blade slashes downward.

- **CLOSE ON:** One of the Seven peels away at the top of the ceremonial wrappings on the crown of the Prince's head and pulls out his BRAIN.

The hands of the Seven, whichever one who now holds Prince Menelik's brain, opens their palms -- holding it as one would do to cup water.

As they raise the brain into the air, the Prince speaks --

PRINCE MENELIK (V.O.)
(in Awngi, subtitled)
I am Prince Menelik of Saba. My mother, Makeda, taught me to serve with a selfless heart. My father, Solomon, challenged me to meet divine duty with a willing soul. I was chosen as tribute to the Eternal Knot of Infinity, the sacred pilgrimage ordained by our gods. At the edge of time and space, I communed with men, women, and children experiencing the last seconds of reality. Inside, in pockets of time manifested as playgrounds for the seven who live outside the reason of men...I killed a man I could not see for my eyes.
(MORE)

PRINCE MENELIK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
A father orchestrated my first death for an arm. I suffocated an innocent to gain my nose, then a woman gambled her life away for my legs. I murdered a boy to get back an arm. I lost a leg to a madman. I broke a mirror so I could speak, then drowned a man of prayer so I could hear. I lost an eye to a mother's aim, then I took the breath away from a boy too weak to challenge me to gain back my final leg and eye. In the waning hours of my journey, I found myself staring at a reflection of where I began. I ended them as well. This I did under the pretense of salvation for my people. This I did under the belief, no matter the reason, the gods who we entrust with the pillars of our lives walk with authority. We must acquiesce, how could we not, since they hold the key of creation...but if this is not true. If this is all but a dark, sinful, jest perpetually repeating for nothing more than a mere oppressor?

MONTAGE ENDS.

INT. RED ROOM - DAY

The necklace with the red carving of the Eternal Knot of Infinity swings in and out of frame in SLOW MOTION.

The red room darkens until it's pitch black, except the swinging necklace.

PRINCE MENELIK
(in Awngi, subtitled)
Then rebirth my body a sword.

CLOSE ON: When the swinging stops...the red carving of the eternal knot BREAKS!

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK:

“INDULGE.”

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ALTAR OF FLOWERS - NIGHT

The Seven still encircle the Prince’s gutted, torn apart corpse, divvying up his remains.

Prince Menelik, like a butterfly emerging from the cocoon, rises up from the open rib cage of his previous, exploited body.

He dons red robes.

A red shawl covers his face, held up by a red crown.

And he carries a blood red sword, shaped and adorned like the ceremonial blades of The Eternal Knot.

The Seven all turn their attention to the Prince.

There’s a moment of silence that spans millennium as each of these cloaked figures prepare their next move.

Seven reaches for their staff.

Prince Menelik thrusts his sword through Seven’s heart.

Seven drops dead. The Prince uses his foot to push them off the sword’s tip.

Six reaches their staff. The Prince heads their way.

Six taps their staff. An ethereal HUM fills the air.

Prince Menelik slices their head off in one swing before anything can happen.

Five and Four taps their staffs on the ground in unison.

The HUM rings out.

In an instant, Prince Menelik’s skin and bandages are gone.

He’s a bloodied, mangled, man without skin, flayed and ripped from his body.

The Prince fights through the pain and swings the sword in the direction of Five and Four.

Both of them drop dead, the top portions of their body sliding to the ground.

Three slaps the sword out of the Prince’s hand and grabs him by the neck.

Prince Menelik breaks Three’s wrists. They fall to their knees in agony. The Prince picks up his sword and rams it into their gut. Three keels over, dead.

Two rams his staff into the Prince’s chest and raises him upwards.

One grabs the wrist holding the sword to keep it at bay. They use their other hand to rip the crown and shawl from the Prince’s face.

Prince Menelik yanks away his hand and slices One’s off.

One falls to the ground in agony. They try to put their hand back on, but it won’t seamlessly graft back onto their skin.

The Prince raises the sword at Two’s face and flicks it upward. Two’s face is cut in half!

He’s brought to the ground as Two’s lifeless body falls. He pulls the staff from his chest and heads to --

One, who’s been crawling away with their staff towards the entrance leading out of the altar, great black steps leading into the interior of the Black Pyramid.

The Prince starts running.

One holds up their staff in the air. The HUM fills the air.

It blows off one of the Prince’s arms! Right as he thrusts the sword through One’s face.

One’s body goes limp as they die.

Prince Menelik coughs up blood as they pull out the sword.

QUEEN SHEBA (O.S.)
(in Awngi, subtitled)
Menelik! Menelik! Let go of me!
It’s our son! Prince! Prince!?

From the shadows below, out of the depths, running up the stairs is Queen Sheba.

She flings herself into her son’s arms. Crying.

QUEEN SHEBA (CONT’D)
(in Awngi, subtitled)
You’ve come back to me.

Prince Menelik stabs his mother. Her eyes, shudder, in disbelief.

As the life leaves her, Prince Menelik gently sets her down on the steps.

A volley of arrows, their tips on fire, hit the Prince in the back! He turns around...to a volley of fire-tipped arrows straight into his chest. The Prince keels over.

KING SOLOMON (50s), a golden crown interwoven with red, yellow, and green gemstones atop his head, advances from the darkness, his sword drawn, his face hollow and dour from what he must do next.

GUARDS, arrows drawn, follow him. They gasp at the scene ahead.

King Solomon holds his emotions as best he can, when he sees the dead Queen and his son.

Guards prepare another volley, but King Solomon holds up his hand.

He raises his sword. No need for words.

Prince Menelik also raises his.

Father and son slowly advance on one another, until their close enough for their swords to clash.

Prince Menelik heaves forward with a downward swing.

King Solomon defends, uses his body weight to fling the attack upwards, and dives in with a thrust!

Prince Menelik feels the blade enter and exit his body.

He slumps down to the floor with his father’s help.

The King pulls away the shawl.

The Prince has come to his senses in his last moments.

He reaches his hand to touch him.

PRINCE MENELIK
(in Awngi, subtitled)
Father...

He meekly raises his face near King Solomon’s ear and whispers. Then, Prince Menelik experiences his last death.

Solomon's guards finish wrapping the body of Queen Sheba. A guard walks over to the king.

KING SOLOMON
(in Awngi, subtitled)
Burn the temple down, then the rest of this accursed land.

The King picks up the body of his son and descends down the stairs. The guards carrying Queen Sheba do the same.

As they exit -- we, the audience, walk back up the precipice of the stairs leading to the demarcation between the steps and the entrance to the Altar of Flowers.

There, Incarnate bows.

The Seven, fully alive and fully intact, CLAP.

KING SOLOMON (V.O.)
The world began in violence and consumption. So community is built. We learn mistrust. We become complicit, uphold, and rationalize. We grow apathetic to cope. We justify our actions to ensure survival. How we sneer at blood-soaked mirrors. Find absolution through necessity. Abandon all pretense of illusion. Abandon all pretense of hope. We are the god you seek. Life is meaningless. So indulge. And give us your body.

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK:

"AND GIVE US YOUR BODY."

END.