

A carriage lies turned over on a nearby dirt roadway. There are various goods scattered about with some of its load having tumbled into the adjoining field. One of the wagon's wooden wheels had fractured and caused the subsequent roll that scattered the cargo.

The driver is cowering at one end of the wagon. He is attempting to shelter in place as several small fires are spreading across the field on each side of the wreckage. One of the two horses is pinned under its own rigging, squealing as it tries to get back on its feet. The other horse is lying a short distance away as an orange scaled dragon perches on top of its corpse.

The dragon stands on four legs with one of the forelegs pinning the corpse, its talons sinking into the horse's hindquarters. Its wings are flared in an attempt to appear bigger and establish dominance. A crocodile like maw clamps down on the horse's shoulder and pulls the limb free. With a hoof sticking from one side of its mouth, it chomps down, folding the leg bone down on the outside of its overbite and causing the hoof to drop away as the creature chews and swallows.

After Sarah, Jack and Wolf laid eyes on the circling dragon, Sarah began opening portals to hop across the landscape. The snowfall was left behind as the three descended back down into autumn, the surrounding foothills consisting of various oranges and reds. They had passed from one hill to the next, and now stop on a final hill as the dragon lands to one end of the crash site.

"Are you crazy," Jack asks.

"What?" Sarah asks. "It's not like it's a Demon Souls' dragon. These are the dragons you run towards instead of away from."

Jack looks back at Wolf only to find eyes narrowing at him. "Stop doing that," Wolf complains. "I don't know why you keep looking at me for answers. You've been here longer than I have."

"I just keep feeling like I'm missing something here," Jack replies. "Sarah, you keep bringing this stuff up like we know what you're talking about. Demon's soul? How's that supposed to help us?"

Sarah groans. "Look, I just mean that these guys aren't that tough. It's ok to go charging at dragons in this world."

"As compared to what?" Jack asks. "Comparing a thing to something harder doesn't mean that we can defeat the weaker thing."

"Alright," Sarah says, turning to walk away. "I'll take care of this on my own. Just stay out of sight."

"Sarah, that's not what—"

She opens a portal and steps out behind the cowering wagon driver as he turns back to see her. Before he can react, the butt of her katana comes down, striking him in the head. She grabs him by the collar and shoves him through the portal. "Don't need you getting in the way," she says before closing the portal.

A new portal opens at her feet, and through it she can see the top of the dragon as it feasts. "You sure are a mean looking asshole," she says towards the dragon.

The creature raises its head and looks around in an attempt to locate her voice but is disoriented given that the sound came from behind the wagon as well as the portal above. Its nostrils begin to flare, finding her scent equally confusing.

Sarah slides her blade back down the inside of her collar to retrieve her pistols, which are now secured to the outside of her coat but still affixed to the small of her back. It requires more effort to draw them, the new magnetic mechanism vying to keep them in place. A belt passes through slits in her coat and fastens around her waist, securing both the holsters and her coat.

She thrusts the pistols forward and opens fire.

The creature's head whips back and forth, hearing the sound from both directions and finally looking up as the hot lead begins sinking into its back. It sees Sarah looking down and leaps. The creature's head snakes over the lip of the ground, lunging forward as she dives out of the way, leaving the vice to clamp down on the wagon.

Sarah rolls across the dirt before regaining her feet to see the dragon's lower body hanging out of the portal as its bite is secured on the wagon next to her. She opens fire into the dragon's face, wounds opening and rendering an eye useless. The creature shakes its head in a refusal to let go, jerking the wagon back towards the portal despite the pinned horse's squeals.

The wood finally splinters and breaks apart, allowing the dragon to drop down from the opening where it lands on all fours. It turns the ruins of its face away and glares at Sarah with its remaining eye. It roars its defiance, then launches a gout of flame her direction.

Sarah quickly opens a portal in front of her, sending the napalm substance out over the adjoining field.

The dragon squawks as it sees its trump card so casually dismissed. Its wings flare, then it launches itself into the air, beginning a slow ascent as it studies the vexing creature clad in red.

Sarah just nods, resetting her magazines and putting away one of the pistols. I was hoping you'd take this into the air, she thinks as she reaches back to draw the katana.

Sarah opens a new portal in the ground, again looking down at the top of the dragon as it continues to ascend. She steps over the edge and the bottom of her coat folds up before she rotates to fall downward with her katana pulled back. The wind is whipping against her face, making it hard to keep her eyes open. Shit, I need some goggles for this.

She rotates again, causing her coat tail to fold up around her as she extends her legs out and apart as if she were sitting on the floor. Using her backside as a windbreak, she extends her pistol between the 'V' of her legs and begins firing down at her target.

The dragon immediately orients on her and lunges upward as she swings her sword, opening another portal. It approaches the backside of the portal and does a double take as she disappears right in front of its approaching mouth. The creature is then struck in the side by lead and looks over to see her sailing across another part of the sky.

Sarah's transition through the portal changes from a fall into a jettison, causing the exit to seem like a cannon blasting her across the sky. She travels in a shallow arc as all of her momentum bleeds away. She empties the remainder of her magazine and stows the pistol as her legs swing forward, giving the impression of someone in a long jump. Her stomach lurches as gravity reasserts its dominance by pulling her into a steeper curve.

Sarah opens another portal, vaulting over the lip and starting a fall like the cart of a roller coaster that just crested a peak. She grips the katana with both hands as she accelerates towards the top of the dragon. It's looking towards the portal she just entered while she descends from above it. Her blade is lifted over her shoulder and poised to be brought down across its wing.

She heaves as she brings the blade around like swinging a baseball bat. Her blade comes in contact with the membrane, biting in, then causing her to roll away as the sudden change in resistance creates a jerking motion that's followed by her collision with the wing as it flaps back into her.

The dragon squawks and pulls away as Sarah enters a tumble. Feet and hands pass over her head sporadically as the horizon's glowing orange line passes in and out of her field of view at different angles. Sarah's vision starts to blur as she begins opening sequential portals, each of them passing by her as she continues to fall.

She finally extends her arms and legs out, making herself as flat as possible and causing her tumble to slow. Her vision swims as her gaze finally fixes on the approaching ground, allowing her to open a portal ahead of her movement.

Sarah falls through and is sent into another shallow arc across the sky. She covers her mouth as her gag reflex triggers and forces her eyes closed while her momentum continues to abate.

As Sarah's stomach lurches again, she wills herself to open her eyes, then wipes away the water that was forced into them. She rotates through a new portal, once again beginning a fall. Her descent is away from the dragon as she looks over to see it hovering half a mile away.

She's falling headfirst, squinting and gritting her teeth as she burps, then tries to choke down the taste of vomit. Oh, how I hate you, she thinks, allowing her eyes to close. You break—and you twist—EVERYTHING. Nothing is ever good enough, and you make everyone hurt—just because you do. Her thoughts force her anger to build, becoming greater than the state of her nausea. "I hate you," she yells as her watering eyes open and glare.

Tears streak across her temples and the tops of her ears as she opens another portal ahead her fall. It's facing the top of the dragon, and the creature looks up to see her rapid approach. It roars, venting its pain and frustration at her, and begins flying upward, its body porpoising in the ascent.

Sarah extends her hands and arms behind her as if she were skydiving in a wingsuit. Her eyes are narrow slits as the wind thrashes against her face. She's falling towards the dragon's snapping jaws as it eagerly moves towards her. Her back arches inward as the creature's maw passes through the opening. She passes to the side, the tail of her coat slapping the top of its snout as she opens and passes through a different portal.

The dragon comes to an abrupt stop after brushing against her, its wings colliding with the lip of the portal, dislocating them and opening rents along its back. Its claws reach up along its neck and hook over the portal's lip in an attempt to grasp a ledge. The creature mewls as its wings become limp and folding down.

Sarah jettisons from an exit portal in a vaulting leap, pulling her weapon back over her shoulder, gripping it with both hands, and preparing to stab as she sails toward the dragon's belly. She heaves as she slams into it, burying the blade to the hilt. The entry wound then acts like the teetering point of seesaw; as she dangles from the handle, it dips causing the blade tip to rise inside the creature.

The creature's hind legs kick as Sarah reaffirms her grip. She pulls herself up to the handle, then opens another portal inside its body. The creature's movements immediately become more frantic and a howl leaves its throat as the neck thrashes inside the portal above.

Sarah places her feet against it, then pushes herself away, pulling the sword free in the process. Another portal opens and sends her rolling across the ground in a heap. The roll finally stops as she curls up on her side, but that quickly changes as she forces herself onto all fours and she begins to vomit.

She soon hunches forward, burying her head against her forearm, squeezing her eyes closed, and willing her world to stop moving. The grass poking against her mouth is a welcome sensation, acting as a reassurance of the ground still being there. Thank you, grass, she thinks. Just stay right there.

When she starts to hear footsteps, Sarah raises her head slightly and squints their direction while shamelessly continuing to drool. She only manages to see her katana still gripped in her outstretched arm. Why are you over there, she thinks to her arm. The figures beyond are blurry so she just shoves her weapon away and folds the other arm over her head.

Jack and Wolf stop next to her. "Well, that was something," Jack says looking down to her and shaking his head.

"Just shush," Sarah starts, then fights back a burp. "Shush your face, Jack."

Wolf's gaze is turned upward, looking between two dangling figures. "Ugh," he starts, hesitantly. "Red, I think we need to have a sit down about your animal cruelty."

Sarah waves the hand atop her head as if to dismiss the comment, then curls it into a pointing gesture, towards the sky while certain she's pointing at Wolf. "No."

Jack looks up with Wolf and nods. "It might be sloppy, but you can't say it's not effective."

The dragon is still suspended in the air, its arms wide as if it were a scarecrow displayed in a field. Its neck and head are folded down against its body while its chest looks like a deflated balloon.

A separate location looks like dew coalescing on the tip of a leaf, but instead of a leaf, it's the exit portal. And instead of dew, it's a ribcage partially concealed by muscle as the lower portion is flexed outward, allowing organs and viscera to hang down in looping strands.

Sarah pushes herself off her forearms and wipes the back of her wrist across her mouth. She flops onto her butt, then leans forward to rest her elbows on her knees. "I think we're done here," she says, looking at the grass between her feet and spitting. "Let's go someplace else."