SOFTWARE & TECH

Solimar The Sword Of The Monarchs

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Introduction: A New Legend in the Metroidvania Realm

The world of indie gaming has seen an extraordinary renaissance in the **metroidvania** genre, with countless titles vying for the attention of exploration-hungry players. Yet every so often, a game emerges that not only honors the classic conventions of the genre but also dares to weave a fresh narrative tapestry. **Solimar The Sword Of The Monarchs** is precisely such a title. Developed by the talented team at Something We Made, this 2D action-adventure platformer invites players into a beautifully hand-drawn kingdom brimming with secrets, danger, and a deeply personal story.

Set in a world where the sun has been shattered and the land lies in perpetual twilight, **Solimar The Sword Of The Monarchs** casts you as the young heir to a fallen dynasty. Armed with the legendary blade that gives the game its name, you must traverse interconnected biomes, unlock new abilities, and uncover the truth behind the monarchs' disappearance. This article offers a comprehensive look at every facet of the game – from its intricate level design and fluid combat to its haunting soundtrack and thematic depth. Whether you are a seasoned metroidvania enthusiast or a newcomer curious about the buzz, read on to discover why this indie gem deserves a place in your collection.

The Story Behind the Sword: Narrative and Lore

The heart of **Solimar The Sword Of The Monarchs** lies in its narrative. You play as a child of the royal lineage, forced into exile after a cataclysm that shattered the sun and plunged the kingdom into darkness. The monarchs, once benevolent rulers who maintained balance with the celestial shards, have vanished. The only clue left behind is the legendary sword, Solimar – a weapon that can absorb and redirect light and shadow.

The story unfolds through environmental storytelling, cryptic NPC conversations, and ancient murals hidden within caves and ruined citadels. Rather than relying on lengthy cutscenes, the game allows players to piece together the history of the world at their own pace. This approach rewards curiosity and encourages multiple playthroughs, as new lore fragments are often tucked away behind optional challenges. The themes of loss, duty, and the fragile nature of hope are woven seamlessly into the gameplay, making every discovery feel meaningful.

Characters and Factions

You will encounter a handful of memorable characters during your journey. The most prominent is a mysterious hooded figure known only as the Emissary, who appears at key moments to offer cryptic guidance – or to test your resolve. There are also scattered survivors, such as the remnants of the sun priests, the shadow-tainted outcasts, and the flickering spirits of former monarchs. Each faction has its own perspective on the catastrophe, and your choices in dialogue can subtly influence the world's state, though the game remains largely linear in its critical path.

The titular sword, Solimar, is more than a weapon – it is a sentient artifact that grows in power as you collect celestial shards. Its voice occasionally echoes in your mind, offering commentary on your actions and revealing fragments of its own memory. This relationship between the wielder and the blade forms an emotional core that elevates the narrative beyond typical fantasy fare.

Gameplay Mechanics: Exploration, Combat, and Progression

Solimar The Sword Of The Monarchs adheres to the classic metroidvania formula while introducing several innovative mechanics. The world is a sprawling, interconnected map divided into distinct regions: the Ashen Canopy (a forest of blackened trees), the Cerulean Depths (an underwater cavern system), the Amber Steppes (a wind-swept desert), and the Obsidian Spire (the final fortress). Each region features unique environmental hazards and enemies that require specific abilities to navigate effectively.

Combat System

Combat is real-time and relies on a combination of light and shadow attacks. The sword can be charged to unleash a burst of radiant energy that stuns enemies, or you can perform a dark slash that deals massive damage but consumes a portion of your health. Balancing these two stances is crucial, especially during boss encounters. The game also introduces a parry mechanic that, if timed correctly, reflects incoming projectiles and leaves enemies vulnerable. Mastering parries is essential for surviving late-game challenges, but the game provides enough windows to learn without punishing beginners excessively.

Abilities and Upgrades

As you progress, you acquire new movement and combat abilities. These include the double jump, a wall slide, a dash that passes through certain barriers, and the ability to create temporary platforms of solidified light. Each ability is tied to a specific biome boss, encouraging thorough exploration before tackling the next area. The game cleverly hides secret rooms that contain upgrades for your health, mana, and sword damage. Collecting enough shards also unlocks passive buffs, such as reduced damage from shadow attacks or increased parry windows.

The progression system is satisfyingly transparent: you always know what new skill you will gain after defeating a major boss, which keeps motivation high. However, the game also includes optional challenge rooms that reward fragments of the lore or cosmetic changes to the sword’s appearance.

Visual and Audio Design: Painting a Fallen World

One of the first things that strikes you about **Solimar The Sword Of The Monarchs** is its exquisite hand-drawn art style. Every background element is meticulously detailed, from the crumbling stonework of ancient temples to the bioluminescent flora of the deep caves. The color palette shifts dramatically between regions: the ashen forest uses desaturated grays and muted browns, while the depths burst with electric blues and purples. This visual contrast reinforces the emotional tone of each area and makes navigation feel like a journey through a living painting.

Soundtrack and Audio Cues

The musical score, composed by an independent artist known for their work on atmospheric indie titles, is a masterpiece of subtlety and power. Ambient tracks use soft strings and piano to evoke melancholy, while combat themes incorporate driving percussion and synthesized arpeggios. The sound design deserves special mention: the clang of the sword against a shield, the whisper of wind through empty halls, and the distorted echoes of the sword’s voice all contribute to an immersive audio experience. Playing with headphones is highly recommended to catch the positional audio cues that often hint at hidden passages.

Comparisons to Other Metroidvanias

Hollow Knight, *Ori and the Blind Forest*, and *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*. **Solimar The Sword Of The Monarchs** shares the somber atmosphere and nonlinear exploration of *Hollow Knight*, but its combat system is more forgiving and its storytelling leans toward explicit narrative beats rather than pure environmental lore. Unlike *Ori*, the game does not feature a skill tree or optional upgrades that significantly change playstyle – the progression is more linear in terms of core abilities. However, it compensates with a tighter focus on swordplay and a unique light/dark mechanic that feels original.

The game's difficulty curve is well-balanced. Early areas are challenging but fair, while late-game zones require precise execution and pattern recognition. Boss fights are the highlight: each monarch (the corrupted rulers of the shards) has a distinct attack pattern and phase transition. The final boss, the Shattered Sun, is a multi-stage encounter that demands mastery of all your abilities. Compared to other indie metroidvanias, the game offers about 12–15 hours of content for a first playthrough, with additional time required for 100% completion.

Developer Insight and Reception

Something We Made is a small indie studio with a passion for hand-drawn art and tight gameplay. Their previous titles include shorter adventure games, but **Solimar The Sword Of The Monarchs** represents their most ambitious project. The development cycle spanned over three years, with a Kickstarter campaign that exceeded its funding goal by 200%. The studio has been transparent about their design philosophy, frequently sharing development diaries on social media. This engagement built a loyal community that helped beta-test and refine the game's balance.

Upon release, **Solimar The Sword Of The Monarchs** received positive reviews from critics and players alike. It holds an 81 average on Metacritic, with praise directed at its art style, soundtrack, and emotional depth. Some criticism has been aimed at the map's occasional obtuseness – certain paths are not clearly indicated, leading to frustrating backtracking. The developers have since released patches that add optional waypoint markers and improve the map UI. The game is available on PC, Nintendo Switch, and major consoles, with a mobile port rumored to be in development.

Tips for New Players: How to Survive the Twilight

If you are about to embark on your journey with **Solimar The Sword Of The Monarchs**, consider these practical tips:

- Explore every corner. Hidden rooms often contain health upgrades or lore tablets. The game rewards thoroughness with tangible benefits.
- Master parrying early. Many enemies and bosses become trivial once you learn to reflect projectiles. Spend time practicing against the basic shadow minions in the Ashen Canopy.
- Use the light stance for exploration. The charged light attack can reveal hidden platforms and illuminate dark areas. Don't rely solely on combat stances.
- Return to previous areas after gaining new abilities. The world is designed for backtracking; many shortcuts and secrets become accessible only after you obtain the double jump or dash.
- Listen to the sword's whispers. The artifact often hints at nearby secrets or warns of impending ambushes. Its dialogue is not just flavor – it's functional.
- Save often. While there are save points scattered across the map, some sections have long stretches without a checkpoint. Manual saving at every bench is wise.
- Don't neglect upgrades. If you find yourself struggling, search for health and mana shards before attempting a boss. A slight stat boost can make a difference.

For players seeking a greater challenge, there is a New Game+ mode where enemies deal more damage and certain mechanics are altered. This mode also unlocks alternate endings based on your completion percentage and choices made regarding the sword's power.

Conclusion: A Blade Worth Wielding

Solimar The Sword Of The Monarchs stands as a testament to the creativity and passion that indie developers bring to the gaming landscape. It delivers a deeply atmospheric world, a compelling narrative, and gameplay that respects the metroidvania tradition while carving its own identity. The hand-drawn visuals and haunting score create an unforgettable mood, while the light-and-shadow combat offers tactical depth that rewards practice. Though it has minor rough edges in navigation, the overall experience is polished and emotionally resonant.

For fans of exploration-heavy platformers and those who appreciate stories about sacrifice and legacy, this title is a must-play. The sword of the monarchs awaits – will you take up the blade and restore the sun, or will you let the shadows consume everything? The choice, as always, lies in your hands.

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