

STEEL URNS

S1E1

"EAT THE DOG OR STARVE"

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COLD OPEN

EXT. STEEL URN ARENA: THE MOON

The grey, crater marked surface of the moon rolls out before us in silence.

Off on the horizon, a domed city illuminated by yellow street lights.

OVER BLACK: Standing Unit: Noun

Wham

A massive, bipedal robot *slams* into the lunar surface in front of us. Massive bullets kick up dust all around the machine as it uses boosters mounted on its frame to dodge the onslaught before righting itself.

OVER BLACK: Human-piloted, bipedal exoskeletons, typically standing 30 ft. tall. Piloted from the chest, with a "head" serving as a sensor array. Originally created for intergalactic and zero gravity construction. Now commonly used in warfare and gladiatorial fight sports.

The machine, a NEON GREEN STANDING UNIT, returns fire with its own massive pistol. It has a decal on the front for the BARARDI SHIPPING COMPANY.

A 2nd machine, a GREY CAMOUFLAGED SU, piloted by JAYCE HARGRAVE (late 20's, a rugged, square jawed man) quickly dodges and closes the gap between them, brandishing a baton.

Neon SU fires off its boosters at full power to change direction. As it does, the hydraulics under its armor start to give off the soft orange glow of heating metal.

OVER BLACK: Steel Urn: Noun. Colloquial name for a standing unit.

The heat continues rising. Pilot of the Neon Urn notices the spike and throttles back on his boosters.

CHYRON: So named due to the tendency of the jet boosters causing the lithium-ion batteries to overheat, leading to "thermal runaway." This is typically fatal to pilots.

Neon ditches the pistol as camo once more closes in, grabbing onto the enemies' baton with both hands to stop it and delivery a powerful kick.

LUNER ANNOUNCER
Wow, what a move!

INT. ARENA SPECTATOR ROOM - DAY

One wall of this room is entirely taken up by a high def screen showing the action on the lunar surface.

Across from it is a throng of SPECTATORS cheering, booing, and even throwing down bets using projected displays on their wrists and augmented reality glasses.

Deep in the throng of bodies, pushed up to the front of the crowd, are two children with stars in their eyes, intently watching the dazzling display of mechanized mayhem.

The older child, LEE (12, nonbinary, close cropped haircut, a dreamer that will still look 6 times before they leap) leans down to the younger, JACK (10, an amateur perfectionist, unkempt haircut) clasping his shoulder as they point to the display.

LEE
God, you see that move Jayce pulled?

JACK
I know right?! INSANE!

Lee's attention is suddenly pulled to the side as they see an USHER walking down the front row.

The Usher scans everyone's face one-by-one using a device mounted to his head, which sends a green or red message to a wrist device, telling him who has tickets.

A crowd member flashes red. He tries to run but a burly SECURITY GUARD clotheslines him, pinning him down as another guard to zip-ties his hands and drags him out.

LEE
Shit, Jack?

JACK
Holy shit Jayce is going for the takedown!

LEE
Its go time Jack.

Jack turns and meets eyes with the usher. The scanner gets his face.

Red message.

He points out the two kids.

JACK

Fuck!

USHER

Hey you!

Jack and Lee duck into the crowd, moving through the throng of braying people as the security guards give chase.

LEE

Keep moving, I ain't paying the fine!

Lee and Jack get eyes on the exit, but two guards are blocking the way out now.

Jack and Lee scan the room. Jack eyes an open window over the mezzanine seats, leading to the roof.

JACK

This way!

Jack grabs Lee and sprints toward the balcony stairs, ducking the grasp of a bouncer posted at the landing. The Usher gives chase, 3 guards in tow.

USHER

Move your ass!

The VIPs scoff and duck from the two children as they make a mad dash toward the wall. Lee and Jack push a table toward the wall, toppling glass and drinks.

LEE

Excuse us!

Lee jumps up on the table top, cupping their hands to boost Jack up to the window.

Jack just barely gets a hold of the ledge. The security team is barreling down on Lee now.

Jack turns and reaches for Lee. They jump and grab it.

Just before he can pull them up, the Usher gets a hold of Lee's foot.

USHER

Get back here little shit, no free rides!

Lee kicks him square in the jaw, sending him tumbling back over the table and into the security guards.

Jack heaves with all his might, getting Lee up through the window before they slam it shut behind them.

EXT. ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Lee dusts themselves off and scans the rooftop for a way down.

LEE
There! We should be able to get to
that fire esca...

Lee turns to see Jack entranced by Jayce's fight on the big screen. He's managed to pin the other pilot to the ground.

Lee doubles back to Jack, looking at the fight over his shoulder.

JACK
Damn. I bet he never has to sneak
into shit...

LEE
Must be nice.

JACK
Yeah.

Lee looks over to the rooftop access door, then back to Jack.

LEE
We gotta go.

Lee reaches out to grab Jack's shoulder.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. NEW ALBUQUERQUE: SCRAPYARD - DAY

12 years later.

A giant mechanical hand grabs hold of a hunk of scrap. The massive hands sift through it until they find what looks like 2 small boosters.

The hands belong to GRADEY (full name TARDIGRADE), a massive bipedal steel urn with a silver and grey paintjob.

Rough angular plates create a very roughshod silhouette of a hardy machine scrapped together with as much care as its owner can afford.

Surrounding this machine are massive mounds of scrap metal, torn up mech limbs, and scorched cockpits. Each pile has a sloppy label hovering above it: ARMS, LEGS, SERVOS, Etc.

Overlooking the scrap, towering skyscrapers and a sky full of floating billboards. A rocket blasts off into space in the distance.

INT. GRADEY - CONTINUOUS

The cockpit of Gradey, a seat with two mechanical arms attached to control sticks. Its cramped, but it's functional.

Strapped into the pilot's seat, a now 24-year-old Lee (close cropped haircut, wearing a jumpsuit and under shirt with chest webbing to hold tools). They smile as they observe what's in Gradey's hands, displayed in real time on 360 degrees of screens.

LEE
(sotto)
Jackpot!

END OF COLD OPEN