

# ***Starbuck Starr***

Episode 1: The Wrath of Moloch

An Original Serial

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

A large, sleek star cruiser rips past.

SUPER: Interplanetary Prison Transport

INT. STAR CRUISER - HALLWAY

A shambling, misshapen brute, squat, with huge arms, pushes a cleaning cart with rattling wheels. He wears what looks to be little more than a glorified diaper.

The brute approaches a fat guard, who stands before a large door that is both imposing and secure.

The guard's blue uniform bears the number 182. He frowns as the brute, BARBOS, draws near.

182

You're late, Barbos.

BARBOS

(his voice is  
slurred and wet)

Barbos...clean...

Barbos holds up his mop.

182

I should be off duty by now.  
Where have you been?

BARBOS

Barbos...clean...

Barbos holds up his mop.

182

Yeah. Barbos clean. I know.  
(turning to a keypad)  
We've only been doing this for  
six months, you simple brick.  
I think you would know...

Barbos clubs 182 with his mop.

The handle cracks across the guard's skull. He collapses in a heap.

Barbos steps to the keypad, stabbing at it with sausage fingers. He struggles with the numbers, but gets it right.

Heavy locks spring free and the door swings open.

Barbos pushes his cart inside.

INT. BEYOND THIS DOOR

In the center of this room is a huge block of translucent material. A variety of tubes lead from this block to strange machines that blink, gurgle, and whirl.

Encased in this block is a large, dark creature; humanoid, but also amorphous, as if rippling. It seems more shadow than substance.

Barbos steps to the block and caresses it, peering inside, where the creature's red eyes are alert, staring back.

Turning now, Barbos snatches a tarp from off his cart, revealing a large, plastic barrel.

He hefts the massive barrel over his head. Purple veins sprout from his arms and neck as he strains.

He cracks the barrel on the block like an egg.

Thick, green acid oozes from the barrel, coating the block, which begins to sizzle and bubble and melt.

Barbos is startled as lights flash and an ALARM sounds.

INT. SHIP'S CONTROL, MAIN DECK

Multiple technicians tend to various control panels. All are dressed similar to 182, but bear unique numbers.

Number 117 snaps alert as the ALARM sounds, frowning as he scans the screens before him. He speaks into a com.

INT. BARBOS AND THE BLOCK

The block is nearly eaten through. The creature inside is dissolving as well, exposing its skeleton.

But then, with bubbling skin and dangling strips of flesh, the nine-foot beast slowly rises from its prison.

The creature approaches Barbos. Its grinning skull reveals multiple rows of crooked, knitting-needle teeth.

When it speaks, even its voice seems to be melting.

CREATURE

You remembered. All this time.  
We are close?

Barbos nods "yes" excitedly, with a childish grin.

BARBOS

Barbos...good?

CREATURE

Yes. Barbos good.

Then, with a sickening sucking sound, writhing strips of skin seethe and migrate as the creature reforms itself.

It congeals into something nearly reptilian. But the dark, wet flesh is in constant flux -- as if it housed writhing worms -- never adopting a true final form.

The creature reaches out to stroke Barbos with a clawed, rippling hand.

CREATURE

Barbos very good.

Barbos basks in its praise like a puppy.

INT. SHIP'S CONTROL, MAIN DECK

The ALARM continues to blare maddeningly. A portal slides open and a tall woman strides briskly inside.

She is attractive and fit. Her jet-black hair is cropped severely short.

Dressed in form-fitting black, the number on her uniform reads ELEVEN. She immediately takes charge.

ELEVEN

What is the nature of this alarm?

117

Code 4. Max Wing.

ELEVEN

Specifics.

117

Annex 12.

(concerned)

That's Moloch.

Eleven grabs a com.

ELEVEN

(into com)

Security personnel to Max Wing.

Annex 12. Armor and loaded.

Repeat. Security personnel to

Max Wing. Annex 12. Armor and loaded.

(to 116, another tech)

Who's down there now?

116, at a monitor, scrolls through routine data.

116

Nobody is scheduled. But...

(scrolls some more)

...a cleaning detail went through a while ago...182...with Barbos.

ELEVEN

(to 116)

Get me 182 on the com.

The portal slides open again. A graying, authoritative man steps inside. His number, also on his uniform, is ONE.

Eleven snaps to attention, outranked.

ONE

What's going on here?

ELEVEN

Trouble in the Max Wing, Sir.  
Code 4. Security has been  
dispatched.

116

No response from 182.

ELEVEN

And Barbos is unaccounted for.

ONE

(chuckles)

Barbos? Why, the brute is barely  
ambulatory. The perfect trustee.  
I wouldn't worry about him.

ELEVEN

It may be worse than that, Sir.  
It could be Moloch.

ONE

Balderdash! No prisoner is more  
secure. Order a stand-down until  
we know what's going on.

ELEVEN

That is contrary to established  
protocols, Sir.

ONE

Must you be such a blind slave  
to regulation?

(to 116)

And please, shut down that  
infernal racket!

116, uncertain, shuts down the alarms.

ELEVEN

Sir, I really don't think...

The portal opens. Number One staggers inside. It's the  
same, exact guy, only he is bloody and beaten.

This SECOND ONE quickly raises a laser and fires, blasting  
a smoking hole through the guts of the first One -- big  
enough to roll a cue ball through it.

## SECOND ONE

Secure him!

The original One examines his wound. He chuckles as the jagged flesh surrounding the hole writhes and heals.

BANG. A pair of canisters are launched through the open portal. They roll to the center of the room.

Eleven dives, leaping behind a console.

## ELEVEN

Binders! Take cov...

POW. The canisters explode with a wet, sticky SPLURT.

Every free surface in the room is instantly coated in a thick, white polymer.

The crew struggles, but they are quickly bound as the polymer hardens, transforming them into living statues.

Barbos enters carrying a smoking, double-barreled launcher.

Eleven peers from her concealed position.

The coated figure containing the first One, the one with the gut-shot, begins to tremble.

Eleven watches in shocked disbelief as the coating cracks, then shatters and explodes, as the figure contained within morphs back into its original, monstrous form --

-- that of MOLOCH, the creature from the block.

## ELEVEN

(to herself)

Moloch...

Moloch hears it and whirls. His eyes lock onto Eleven. He strides towards her.

She dives for a com, but finds it coated solid.

Moloch lifts her by the neck. With ease. Her feet dangle in empty air.

While holding Eleven aloft, he steps to another console and rips the hard coating free with his oversized claws.

Moloch then begins typing on the blinking keypads, punching at buttons with his thick talons.

ELEVEN  
(choking)  
What are you doing?

ELECTRONIC VOICE  
(from console)  
New coordinates confirmed.

MOLOCH  
Fiery retribution, young sister.

Moloch now holds the struggling Eleven face to face, fixing her with his repulsive grin.

MOLOCH  
And you can help me.

A BLINKING CONTROL PANEL

Eleven's face is suddenly shoved against this panel.

Her eyes are scrunched tightly shut.

MOLOCH (O.S.)  
Open your eyes. I can pluck  
them out, if you wish.

A thick claw is drawn softly down her cheek.

She opens her eyes grudgingly. A laser scans her retinas.

INT. HALLWAY

As Moloch holds Eleven's face to the panel, a large door opens in the wall next to them.

INT. POD BAY - CONTINUOUS

Moloch enters dragging Eleven with him, followed by Barbos.

It is a hangar, with several two-man pods; bright, red ships shaped like teardrops.

Moloch approaches one of the pods and releases the hatch. He motions for Barbos to climb inside.

MOLOCH

Make haste, my brutish friend.  
Our time is short.

Barbos squeezes himself inside the pod.

MOLOCH

(to Eleven)

And you. I'm afraid our brief  
acquaintance is at its end.

Moloch tightens his grip around her neck.

Eleven draws a dagger from her boot and drives it into  
Moloch's chest.

MOLOCH

Ungh...

(now he smiles)

A blade? How barbaric. I'm  
flattered.

He flings her away from him, across the room like a doll.  
She strikes the opposite wall and collapses to the floor.

Moloch now begins climbing into the pod. The platform  
beneath the pod begins lowering into the floor with a  
pneumatic HISS and puffs of steam.

Moloch draws out the blade and tosses it to Eleven as the  
pod disappears into the floor.

MOLOCH

Your weapon, my savage princess.

(laughing now,  
dark and evil)

And give my regards...to the inferno!

Eleven snatches up the blade and staggers towards the  
descending pod, but the floor seals and the pod is gone.

EXT. STAR CRUISER

The pod is jettisoned from the belly of the mammoth ship.  
Rockets flare as it jets towards a familiar blue planet.

Earth.

Moloch's grinning visage fills the window of the pod.

INT. POD BAY

Eleven limps to a com and lifts the mike. She moves towards a window as she speaks.

ELEVEN

This is Eleven. We have an unauthorized launch at...

Eleven reaches the window. She pales. The com slips from her fingers.

Directly ahead, the moon looms large, growing larger by the second. They are mere moments from impact.

ELEVEN

Oh no...

RADIO VOICE

Umm...we didn't catch that, Eleven.  
Please repeat your location.

Eleven looks to the remaining pods.

EXT. THE CRUISER AND THE MOON

A second pod jettisons from the belly of the giant cruiser only moments before the mammoth ship SMASHES INTO THE MOON.

The explosion is massive; a white-hot fireball that rocks the entire planetoid.

The tiny pod tumbles madly through space, propelled by the tremendous and expanding shock wave.

INT. A DISHEVELED STUDY - NIGHT

The style of the furnishings is late 1800s. Books and papers are strewn everywhere.

Test tubes bubble on a desk, heated by Bunsen burners spouting jets of blue flame. There is a chalkboard covered with arcane mathematical formulae.

And a telescope like we've never seen.

An elderly man in a nightshirt peers through this fantastically improvised telescope; a huge brass structure supported by a spider's web of tangled wires.

A large hole has been crudely fashioned into the roof to accommodate this monstrosity.

IVAN KIPPLE, the man at the scope, wears thick glasses. Tufts of white hair protrude from beneath his nightcap.

He is shocked by what he sees through his scope.

KIPPLE

Oh my...

EMILY (O.S.)

What is it, papa?

Kipple turns to find EMILY KIPPLE behind him, holding a tray with two steaming cups of tea.

In her early twenties, Emily is breathtaking.

But her beauty is of the unpracticed sort, like that of a teacher or a nurse passing through life forever naive of their true radiance.

KIPPLE

(taking a cup)

Most unusual. Unprecedented!  
An explosion of tremendous  
magnitude...on the moon!

EMILY

(steps to the scope)

Let me see.

She peers into the eyepiece.

THROUGH THE SCOPE

A fiery escape pod is racing directly towards her, growing larger at a most alarming rate.

INT. STUDY

Emily jumps back from the scope.

EMILY

Oh!

EXT. THE KIPPLE HOME

The flaming pod SCREAMS directly over their roof.

INT. STUDY

The pair exchange astonished looks.

KIPPLE

Fetch the horses, Emily!

And my trousers!

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

A small camp. Little more than a fire and a tent. The grizzled PROSPECTOR that occupies this camp is cooking a humble meal over the flames.

With a ROAR, the pod falls from the sky, crushing his tent.

The startled Prospector leaps to his feet.

He draws his pistol, then moves to investigate the craft.

The pod door swings open with a HISS of escaping air.

The curious Prospector draws nearer to the door.

His eyes grow wide.

A huge, clawed hand shoots from the opening, then grabs him and snatches him inside with enough force to yank him right out of his boots.

The Prospector's boots lie abandoned on the dusty ground as his O.S. SCREAMS echo helplessly through the woods.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE PROSPECTOR'S BOOTS

Somebody is wearing them now.

EXT. SALOON - NIGHT

The Prospector is standing outside a noisy saloon, back in his boots.

Piano music wafts out through the saloon doors.

Above the door, a sign reads, "HAWK'S RISE SALOON".

INT. SALOON

Poker games at a few tables. A rough-looking crowd. A piano player bangs away in one corner.

An INDIAN drinks alone at one table. Dressed in buckskin, he is rugged and grim. Three ragged scars, large and ugly, adorn one cheek.

A SLEEPING COWBOY rests his head at one end of the bar, a bottle of whiskey in front of him.

The portly BARKEEP steps up to the sleeping cowboy and reaches for the bottle.

Without raising his head, the cowboy shoots out an arm and grabs the Barkeep by the wrist.

SLEEPING COWBOY

Leave it.

The Barkeep pulls free, then looks to the door as the Prospector enters the saloon.

Several heads turn, sizing up this unfamiliar stranger before returning to their business.

The Prospector strides through the room, finally pausing at a table of GRIMY RUFFIANS -- one of whom is easily the largest man in the room. They all look up, each with their own, personal scowl.

The Prospector snatches up the largest Ruffian by the front of his shirt and hefts him into the air, overturning their table.

PROSPECTOR

Who is the leader of this appalling village? Is it you?

Every head turns. A hush settles over the saloon. The piano player hits a sour note, then quiets.

The eyes of the startled Ruffian shift towards the sleeping cowboy.

Now the sleeping cowboy slowly raises his head. He grabs his whiskey bottle as he rises from his stool.

The cowboy is tall and muscular, but lanky. Not exactly handsome, but a strong jaw, and his face grows on you.

Steely eyes peer out from beneath the brim of his battered, dingy hat.

He is wearing a star.

This is SHERIFF BUCK STARR.

BUCK  
Who wants to know?

EXT. SALOON

Barbos is watching through the large front window.

A horse WHINNIES behind him. Barbos turns with a quizzical look on his oafish features.

He steps over to examine this strange animal.

INT. SALOON

The Prospector tosses the Ruffian aside and turns to Buck.

The Barkeep winces as the Ruffian lands hard on one of the tables, smashing it.

PROSPECTOR  
That decoration on your chest...  
it is a symbol of authority?

Buck is confused that this odd stranger would not recognize a Sheriff's badge when he sees one.

BUCK  
Means I'm the law around here.  
The Sheriff. Name's Starr.  
Buck Starr.

PROSPECTOR

How unfortunate for you then,  
Sheriff Starbuck Starr...

The Prospector pulls a blinking, silver laser from his holster and trains it on Buck.

PROSPECTOR

...for there can only be one law,  
and you will be the first to...

Buck draws. Fast. I mean, this guy is like lightning.

In one fluid motion Buck lets go of the bottle, pulls his pistol, SHOOTS the laser from the Prospector's hand, returns the pistol to his holster --

-- and snatches up the bottle before it hits the ground.

The laser skitters away across the barroom floor.

The Prospector looks at his empty hand, stunned.

Buck takes a swig from the bottle and grins.

BUCK

Word to the wise. Less talk.  
More bullets.

The Prospector looks back up at Buck.

PROSPECTOR

Impossible...

BUCK

You'd think so, wouldn't you?

Now Buck draws with his left hand. Again, it's a blur.

BUCK

Oops...I did it again.

The Prospector darkens at this.

His voice deepens, adopting an inhuman timbre.

PROSPECTOR

I...will...not...be...MOCKED!

EXT. SALOON

Barbos is examining the horse close up. Sniffing it, actually. It's horrible to watch, but Barbos begins sniffing the animal's rear end.

The horse's eyes go wide with surprise. It WHINNIES, then bucks -- smacking Barbos in the chest with its hooves.

Barbos is thrown backwards, landing hard in the dirt.

Barbos groans, then stands. He dusts himself off, glaring at the horse.

INT. SALOON

The Prospector, trembling with rage, advances on Buck.

Buck aims his revolver.

BUCK

Now you just hold it right there.

(he doesn't stop)

Hey! I mean it!

(he keeps coming)

C'mon...I haven't shot anybody  
all week.

The Prospector continues to advance until Buck is forced to FIRE, shooting him in the leg.

The Prospector takes the bullet with little more than a grimace. The wound closes and heals.

The Prospector chuckles at Buck. Buck gapes in return.

The Prospector slaps the gun from Buck's hand, and now, he lifts Buck by the neck.

Every patron sits motionless, watching in stunned silence.

PROSPECTOR

Time to die, Sheriff Starbuck Starr.

The Prospector tightens his grip.

BUCK

(choking)

The name is...Buck...arghh...

The HORSE SMASHES through the front window.

A hailstorm of shattered glass. Tables are crushed beneath the animal as cowboys dive clear of its path.

Another wince from the Barkeep, this one bigger, as he helplessly watches the destruction.

The spell is broken, and cowboys trip over each other as they high-tail it outside through the saloon doors.

The Prospector turns to the window, enraged as he spies Barbos through the shattered pane.

PROSPECTOR  
YOU FOOL!

Barbos panics in the face of such rage. He turns to flee, running with an awkward, shambling waddle.

The horse continues to whinny and writhe, overturning more tables.

Buck raises his whiskey bottle, then SMASHES it against the Prospector's head.

The Prospector is not even phased. He snaps his head back to Buck with an angry snarl.

But as the whiskey runs down the Prospector's face, his skin begins to blister and bubble. Some of the skin slides right off, revealing the skull beneath.

An inhuman skull. With crooked, knitting-needle teeth.

The Prospector's eyes go wide. He flings Buck and HOWLS in pain, clawing at his face.

PROSPECTOR  
AGH! What poison is this?!

Buck watches, amazed as the Prospector begins to grow and bulge -- his skin and clothing stretch like taffy -- transforming into something inhuman.

Transforming into Moloch.

With a ROAR borne of pain and fury, huge, leathery wings sprout from Moloch's back.

Now Moloch takes flight -- it is both graceful and ghastly to behold. Moloch smashes through the roof of the saloon and rises up into the starry night sky.

The Barkeep looks up at the hole and faints dead away.

Buck races to the shattered window.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

Buck watches as Moloch dives, swooping low over the terrified saloon patrons who scatter like ants.

But Moloch is heading towards Barbos, and like a hawk, he scoops up the brute with his immense claws.

Buck watches as Moloch flaps off into the desert night, silhouetted by the moon, carrying Barbos beneath him.

INT. SALOON

Buck jerks at the sound of an O.S. GUNSHOT.

He turns. The Indian holds a smoking revolver.

He has shot the horse.

The Indian looks up at Buck.

INDIAN

The beast was in agony.

(motions with  
the gun)

Your weapon. I hope you do  
not mind.

The Indian tosses the gun back to Buck. Buck catches it smoothly and slips it back into his holster.

BUCK

Thanks.

The Indian nods towards the window.

INDIAN

You will hunt them?

Buck steps over to pick up the laser he shot from Moloch's hand. He examines it, fascinated by this weapon, and responds without looking up.

BUCK  
I reckon somebody oughta.

INDIAN  
Then I will come with you.

Buck continues to fiddle with the laser --

BUCK  
Mind if I ask why you're...

-- and almost leaps from his boots as he accidentally discharges the weapon.

A white fireball streaks across the saloon, blowing a huge, smoking hole through the center of the piano with a discordant BWONG.

Buck lights up like a kid at Christmas.

BUCK  
Boy-Howdy!  
(to Indian)  
Now there's a pistol! Mind if  
I ask why you're so eager to set  
off after them boys, chief?

The Indian looks down at the dead animal.

INDIAN  
He was my horse.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Kipple and Emily have arrived at the camp of the grizzled Prospector.

Emerging from the trees, they rein their horses at the sight of the pod. Kipple nearly leaps from his mount.

KIPPLE  
Extraordinary!

Kipple races towards the pod. Emily dismounts, but her approach is a bit more tentative.

EMILY

Be careful, papa.

KIPPLE

Oh, yes. Most careful.

He pokes and prods with abandon, not being careful at all, pushing every button he can find.

Then Kipple finds a button that does something. The hatch opens with a pneumatic HISS right in front of Emily.

EMILY

Oh!

She glances at Kipple, who gives her an eager go-ahead nod.

Emily turns and pokes her head inside the pod.

She SCREAMS, and backs away from the pod, horrified.

Kipple steps up to the hatch to look for himself.

INT. POD

Sprawled inside the pod is the battered corpse of the grizzled Prospector.

EXT. SALOON - NIGHT

Buck and the Indian stand before a small, nervous crowd of men.

BUCK

So who's with us?

A lot of foot shuffling. No one steps forward.

BUCK

You gotta be kidding me. You mean there ain't one...

Kipple and Emily arrive on their galloping horses, interrupting him.

KIPPLE

Sheriff! We must discuss matters  
of great urgency!

BUCK

I'm kind of in the middle of  
something here, gramps.

EMILY

Please. It's very important.

Buck now looks to Emily. And once he does, it takes him a  
moment to catch his breath.

He puts on his best hero smile.

BUCK

Well, now...you tell me what's  
troubling you, little lady, and  
ol' Buck will make it right.

EMILY

There's been a murder!

KIPPLE

By beings from outer space!

A murmur rises up from the group of men. Buck turns back  
to Kipple.

BUCK

You don't say.

KIPPLE

But I do. We found a ship...  
a ship that flies! Technology  
such as I've never seen.

BUCK

And you think it's moon men, huh?

EMILY

Please...listen to him. I saw it,  
too. It was real. And so was  
the body.

Buck looks to Emily, then back to Kipple.

BUCK

Well, old-timer, as luck would have it you picked the one night that talk like that won't land you in the hoosegow till you sober up. But what makes you such an expert on space men?

Kipple extracts a business card from his pocket and hands it to Buck.

KIPPLE

Oh, I'm no expert, but I assure you my scientific acumen is most acute. My name is Dr. Ivan Kipple. I am a scientist, and an inventor.

Buck reads the card.

BUCK

Dr. Ivan Kipple. Scientist and inventor.

(looks up)

What the heck is this?

KIPPLE

It's a card. My card. It tells you who I am.

(with pride now)

I invented that.

Buck pockets the card, unimpressed.

BUCK

Well, good luck with that, but why not just...

They all stop and turn at the sound of a distant ROAR, but growing louder and approaching fast.

Another red escape pod races directly overhead with a deafening WHOOSH.

The wind left in its wake ruffles Emily's hair and dress.

They all follow the pod with their eyes until it disappears from view, crashing in the distance.

KIPPLE

Remarkable!

(turns to Buck)

You see? Intelligent life  
from beyond this world!

BUCK

You say that like it's a  
good thing.

Buck turns back to his small crowd of potential posse  
members. Cue the crickets.

Every last man has fled. The street is empty save for a  
lonely, rolling tumbleweed.

Buck, Kipple, Emily, and the Indian all glance at one  
another, as they are the only ones to be found.

FADE OUT.