

Arca
(script excerpt)

by

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Blinding light fills the screen, then resolves into...

EXT. WASTELAND - DESERT PLAIN - DAY

Little sign of life. Tiny spirals of sand blow across the desert's floor. A long way from anywhere.

Shimmering in the distance, a figure emerges. Like a man, but taller, sunlight glinting off.

CLOSE ON GROUND -

A sound grows, *clomp clomp clomp clomp*. Steady as a metronome. Metallic legs enter frame - a robot, walking through the desert on two legs.

THE ROBOT -

Clunky, massive. Relatively-human proportions, but about seven feet tall. Looks sandblasted, not in top working order, but still plugging away. On its back, a makeshift supply rig, along with a frame that creates a sun shade for

A BOY -

Riding on the Robot's back, mounted like a rider on a camel.

The Boy, whose name is FILO, is 9, but a very sober, stoic 9. His hair is long and unkempt, and his functional clothing was obviously designed with someone older in mind.

His dusty face looks out at the horizon, betraying no expression.

WIDE -

On the massive plain, Filo and his mount, alone, steadily crossing, *clomp clomp clomp clomp*.

EXT. THE SAME - DUSK

Reacting to some internal reminder, the Robot (Filo calls it ARCA, and we'll refer to it as him from now on.) suddenly stops *clomp*-ing.

He stands, turns a circle, taking in 360 degrees of the horizon. He kneels down, close enough to the ground for Filo to dismount.

Filo stretches his legs, looks around. Arca, wasting no time, disassembles the rig on his back and begins assembling it into a tent.

He works with mechanical precision, and a slightly desperate speed that betrays a fierce devotion to his master.

EXT. THE SAME - LATER

The tent has blankets inside and looks to be sturdy enough shelter for this environment.

Arca checks to see that Filo is safe, then sets out quickly in a circular pattern - searching. Without a boy on his shoulders, Arca moves more quickly - *clompclompclompclomp*.

Filo stares at the mountains in the distance.

EXT. THE SAME - LATER

Arca returns to the campsite with scrub and tinder, builds a fire. Filo moves to sit in front of it - warms himself.

Arca is about to set off in search again.

FILO

I'd like to stay outside for a while tonight.

Arca registers this. A crude display hums to life on his upper chest, shows data on the weather, current and projected temperature. He holds up two fingers.

FILO (CONT'D)

(disappointed)

Two hours?

Arca nods firmly.

FILO (CONT'D)

Okay.

Arca bows his head subserviently, then turns and goes *clomp*-ing off again. Filo looks into the fire.

EXT. THE SAME - LATER

Arca comes *clomp*-ing back to the fire, the remains of some small animal in his hands. He crouches near the fire and begins to strip the animal's most edible bits. Filo brings a canteen out from his tent.

EXT. THE SAME - LATER

Arca has his hands flat in front of him, holding up the cooked chunks of meat. Filo eats from it, very businesslike. He sips from the canteen. Arca's display flashes red.

FILO
One more sip?

Arca thinks briefly, nods. Filo sets the canteen down and takes the rest of the meat, ready to get it down before his final splash of water for the night.

INT. THE TENT - NIGHT

Filo lies under the blankets.

FILO
You're sure the mountains are this way?

Arca nods.

FILO (CONT'D)
How many more days?

Arca holds up six fingers.

FILO (CONT'D)
That's not so bad. How many days have we been in the desert?

Arca holds up all ten fingers, then another four.

FILO (CONT'D)
Do you think there'll be people there?

Arca tilts his head and shrugs his shoulders slightly - *I don't know.*

FILO (CONT'D)
But there'll be more water there, right?

Arca nods.

FILO (CONT'D)
And better animals?

Arca nods, his display lists various forms of plant life.

(CONTINUED)

EXT. DESERT PLAIN - DAY

They continue their trek, Arca never breaking stride.

After a long silence, Filo takes off his mask and talks -

FILO

My dad told me a story about a knight. Do you know what a knight is?

Arca thinks, points to the sky.

FILO (CONT'D)

No, a knight. K-N-I-G-H-T.

Arca shakes his head.

FILO (CONT'D)

A knight was, well, my dad said they were like soldiers, sort of, but they fought for honor and for their loved ones. They protected people, and fought monsters and in...fidels.

(Pause)

In the story he told me, the knight had a horse that only he could ride. It was strong, and smarter than other horses, and cared only about helping and protecting the knight.

(Pause)

I read the book he was reading to me, and the horse...I mean, he was in it, but like barely. They didn't talk about him much. My dad said that the first time he read me the story, I got really excited when he talked about the horse. So he just kept making up stuff every time he read the story. I think he made it better.

(Pause)

Do you know what a horse is?

Arca thinks hard. He has to stop walking for a second.

He takes a look around, then suddenly takes off like a shot, running - *clompclompclomp*. Then he breaks the evenness of his stride so it's like a galloping motion - *caclompcaclomp*.

(CONTINUED)

Filo's face breaks into the first pure smile we've seen. He gives a delighted YELL and holds on for dear life, while spurring Arca to go faster.

WIDE -

Arca kicking dust as he speeds across the plain.

EXT. NEW CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The fire is crackling and Filo settles down in front of it.

As he sits, he suddenly hisses in pain - sat on a bruise. Arca rushes over and tries to lift his clothes and see. Filo brushes him off irritably.

FILO

Arca, Arca! It's okay. Stop! Arca stop!

Arca stops and retreats, confused and (for a machine?) hurt.

FILO (CONT'D)

It's alright, it's not bad. It's just a bruise. Arca, you didn't...I mean, I got hurt, but I'll be okay. I don't mind.

Arca moves forward again, sits near Filo and tilts his head - curious.

Filo lifts his shirt to show the bruise.

FILO (CONT'D)

This? It's really small, and it'll go away.

(Pause)

Look, my mom said it like this:

(He thinks)

Filo, dear, there's much bigger hurts in this world, and if you can't put up with a little one once in awhile, how are you going to be ready for the big ones when they come?

(Pause)

I knew you wouldn't hurt me...badly anyway. You can't hurt people on purpose, really, right?

Arca shakes his head vigorously - *no, never.*

(CONTINUED)

FILO (CONT'D)

See? So it's okay.

(Pause)

And if you do it again sometime, I
bet you'll get better at it.

Arca thinks about all of this for awhile, then nods and starts to stand up.

Filo impulsively reaches out and hugs him. Arca stops and lets it happen for a couple of seconds. When Filo releases him, he straightens and walks off.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Arca is marching his lonely patrol circle when he hears something and stops. His head tilts, and he quietly, but swiftly, moves back into the tent.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Filo is having a nightmare. He's sweating, kicking, murmuring something.

Arca regards him, starts to move, hesitates. Distressed at how to deal with this. Then, he awkwardly lays on the ground and puts his arms around Filo. The child seems to relax.

Arca's eyes glow just slightly.

INT. THE SAME - LATER

Filo is sleeping soundly. Arca hears a noise outside, gently extricates himself from Filo's grasp, moves outside.

EXT. THE CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Arca emerges from the tent, searching the horizon. Suddenly a PAW enters the frame. A wild dog, four of them - out of their senses with hunger. They smell the fire, the remains of meat - and Filo.

Arca regards them as they move closer. Staying close to the tent, he stamps his feet and waves his arms - *go away*. The dogs are startled at first by this odd life form, but hunger overcomes fear and they keep advancing.

They growl, move closer, ready for a fight. One of the group stops near the fire, sits, seems confused at the sight of the campsite, as if struggling with a memory.

(CONTINUED)

The other three fan out and move in, snapping at Arca, trying to frighten him with bites and growls. Arca has no fear for his own safety, and warily stays between them and the tent, lashing out to strike them if they get too close.

He lowers himself closer to the ground, the better to use his arms as weapons.

THE LEAD DOG -

Charges directly for him, ramming his chest and trying to clamp down with its jaws.

Arca, not used to fighting something of this size, first grabs and throws it. The other two immediately charge in after, while the first regains its footing and comes back.

The robot begins flailing at them, not always effectively - He's unused to having to adjust so quickly to stimuli.

FILO -

Emerges from the tent, groggy, curious, and sees his Arca in the midst of the struggle. At first in awe of his protector, then switching to concern for his friend.

FILO

Hey!

The dogs and Arca turn at the noise.

The lead dog's nose twitches. He charges at the boy.

Filo is rooted where he stands, facing mortal danger.

ARCA-

Panicked, throws off the other two dogs and leaps...

And tackles the dog, whose jaws snap just short of Filo. A last swipe of his paw scratches the boy's chest.

Arca holds the beast tight, finally looks up and sees -

Torn clothes, and a line of blood on his young master's chest.

As he stares at this line, we see tension in his arms. Painful yelps come from the dog BELOW FRAME - Arca is crushing him to death.

The screams of their alpha male are enough - the two other attackers flee into the night.

(CONTINUED)

Filo finally recovers himself, reaches out to Arca's arms, tries to push them apart.

FILO (CONT'D)

(gently)

It's okay. He's dead, Arca, you can let go. Arca, it's all over. I'm fine.

His words, more than his feeble pushes, work to calm Arca, who finally relents and drops the dog's carcass.

Filo looks at the bloody mess, turns to retch. He looks haunted, memories stirring up.

ARCA -

Comes to his feet a little unsteadily. The dogs' attack left scratches on him and a small crack on his display. The area around the crack blacks out and can't show color anymore.

Both he and Filo hear a noise, and turn -

THE DOG -

The one who didn't attack is still sitting by the fire, regarding them curiously, some echo of an old life familiar to him.

Arca strides toward it purposefully. It rears back but doesn't run. Stirred out of his trance, Filo runs to intervene and stands between them.

Arca freezes, his arm outstretched over the dog, who sniffs curiously at it, all anger subsided.

FILO

He's just hungry, Arca. He wants food. I could use some too.

Having a purpose like this seems to break Arca out of a muddle - he straightens, nods, *clomps* off decisively.

FILO (CONT'D)

You're very lucky. He'll listen to me. You'll be okay.

The dog sniffs at Filo, licks his hand. Filo pets him affectionately.

FILO (CONT'D)

Want to come to the mountains with us? There'll be more food there.

EXT. DESERT PLAIN - DAY

Now a threesome. Arca trudges along with Filo while the Dog trots alongside.

The dog trails back, chews on something in his fur, then hurries to catch up again.

EXT. DESERT/ROCKY LANDSCAPE - DAY

The landscape gradually changes. They have the choice of whether to descend into a wide, rocky canyon, or stay alongside it.

FILO

Is it dangerous to go down there?

Nod.

FILO (CONT'D)

But the chances are better of us getting through.

Another nod.

FILO (CONT'D)

Then it's okay. Let's go.

The threesome descend into the canyon.

END OF EXCERPT
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