

= Steven the Sword Fighter =

" Steven the Sword Fighter " is the sixteenth episode of the first season of the American animated television series Steven Universe . It is written by Joe Johnston and Jeff Liu . In the United States , the episode originally aired on Cartoon Network on April 9 , 2014 , the first new episode to air on the series ' new Wednesday time slot . Pianist Aivi Tran and sound designer Steven Velema of the musical group Aivi & Surasshu composed one of the episode 's soundtracks to resemble the " broken facsimile " nature of Holo @-@ Pearl . The episode was viewed by 1 @.@ 098 million viewers , becoming the thirty @-@ sixth most watched episode aired by the network for the week of April 7 to April 13 , 2014 . It is currently the lowest rated episode of the series .

The episode shows Pearl attempting to teach Steven the art of sword @-@ fighting using Holo Pearl , a holographic version of herself . However , during the lessons , Pearl gets injured and retreats into her gem to heal and make a new body to project .

= = Plot = =

While Steven (Zach Callison) , Garnet (Estelle) , Amethyst (Michaela Dietz) and Pearl (Deedee Magno) are watching a fictional Japanese movie titled Lonely Blade , Pearl critiques the film 's sword fighting techniques and offers to take Steven to the Ancient Sky Arena to show him how it is really done . To give him a proper demonstration , Pearl summons " Holo @-@ Pearl " , a holographic version of herself to spar with . After Pearl wins a sparring match with Holo @-@ Pearl , she begins to show Steven the basics of sword @-@ fighting . However , Pearl 's lessons bore Steven , making him clamor for Pearl to teach him the signature move from the Lonely Blade movie , much to Pearl 's chagrin . While Pearl is distracted talking to Steven , Holo @-@ Pearl impales her sword through Pearl 's chest , which causes Pearl to lose her physical form , leaving nothing but her gemstone . Although Steven is distraught at first , Garnet and Amethyst assure him that Pearl has simply retreated into her gem and will return once she has healed .

Two weeks pass and Pearl is still inside her gem , healing . Steven decides to use Holo @-@ Pearl as a replacement for the real Pearl . However , Holo @-@ Pearl only knows how to sword fight , seeing everything as a potential opponent . Garnet and Amethyst urge Steven to stop using it and wait for the real Pearl to come back . After Holo @-@ Pearl cuts down the real Pearl 's favourite tree , Steven becomes infuriated and tries to drive Holo @-@ Pearl away .

Later that night , Holo @-@ Pearl continues to ask Steven to be challenged in combat , though he repeatedly refuses . Eventually , Steven hits his breaking point and fights back against Holo @-@ Pearl , accidentally activating her " advanced " mode . After an intense fight , Steven is able to destroy Holo @-@ Pearl permanently . Garnet and Amethyst hear the commotion and come to check on Steven , and while he is explaining what he has learned , Pearl finally regains her physical form , having a new outfit variation , and faces the mess left from the recent moment .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Joe Johnston and Jeff Liu . Ki @-@ Yong Bae , Seon @-@ Jae Lee and Seo Whan Kim provided animation direction , Elle Michalka served as art director , and Ian Jones @-@ Quartey provided supervising direction . A sneak peek of the episode was shared on io9 on April 7 , 2014 , with Johnston first announcing the episode on the series ' production blog the following day , shortly after the series ' new Wednesday time slot was promoted on April 2 . In addition , several promotional pieces were published by him , Rebecca Sugar and color stylist Tiffany Ford , encouraging followers to watch . A panel from the storyboard was also promoted , before various background art and animation props were released before and after its premiere ; the animation props indicate the episode was produced thirteenth in production order .

The episode features the songs " Dance of Swords " and " Holo Pearl " by pianist Aivi Tran and sound designer Steven Velema of the musical group Aivi & Surasshu . The latter track , an instrumental piece , was composed to resemble the " broken facsimile " nature of the Pearl clone

who bears the song 's title . The group utilized a " glitchy " piano and " an erratic collection of sounds " for it . The tracks were released onto SoundCloud on April 12 and 13 , respectively .

= = Cultural references = =

Gergo Vas from Kotaku observed various video game references during Pearl 's lecture on sword fighting , including Pokémon , Final Fantasy , Gitaroo Man and Sonic the Hedgehog . In addition , he identified an homage to Revolutionary Girl Utena upon looking at GIFs of Pearl 's sword @-@ fighting scene with her hologram clone . Writing for Cartoon Brew , Kendra Beltran noted that Lonely Blade imitated the style of anime , stating that " while the Universe team didn 't overdo the animation on the anime , you could tell what they were going for without hearing the accents . "

= = Reception = =

" Steven the Sword Fighter " was the first episode to premiere outside of Monday , onto its new time slot of Wednesdays , on Cartoon Network . Upon its premiere on April 9 , 2014 , the episode was seen by 1 @.@ 098 million viewers . It received a Nielsen household rating of 0 @.@ 7 , and was ranked as the thirty @-@ sixth most watched episode aired by the network for the week of April 7 to April 13 , 2014 . It is currently the lowest rated episode of the series .

Beltran highlighted elements of horror in the episode , noting it to come " in small spurts toward the end " , while writing about the " eerie tone of the rainy night matched with the sword @-@ wielding psychopath hologram . " She found it " weird to see Steven trying to not replace her , " regarding her as the established mother figure in the series . She concluded her review stating that while " not much for characterization , " Amethyst and Garnet 's acts of " sitcom comedy " were " the source of laughter this time around " for the series .

Eric Thurm of The A.V. Club graded the episode an A ? , calling it , " in many ways , a perfect distillation of what makes Steven Universe special . " He noted Steven 's attempts to learn sword @-@ fighting as a callback to the first episode , " Gem Glow " , which aired alongside " Steven the Sword Fighter " upon its premiere . Finally , he contrasted Steven 's childishness and refusal to completely learn lessons to Adventure Time and Regular Show , where the protagonists of each have taken steps toward maturity .