

LIGHTMARES

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TEASER

Brilliant BLUE and WHITE streaks of LIGHT SHOOT toward us...then-

FADE IN:

INT. DAVID CASTLE'S APARTMENT - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

Empty pizza boxes and cans of Energy Drinks are strewn across a coffee table in front of half-slept on sofa in this darkened room. DEATH METAL music BLARES in the background as we tour this space.

BANKS of computer equipment and 3-D printers line a wall, each in action, as MINIATURE components come to life one layer at a time in tiny compartments.

A countertop converted into a makeshift lab area is covered with various tools, miniature components, and what appears to be several television REMOTE CONTROLS, each opened and in various arrays of disassembly.

A HAND picks up one of the remote controls and points it toward the monitors, pressing a button. The DEATH METAL volume decreases to a pall. The hand picks up a component from the 3-D printer, holds it in its hand.

The voice of a MAN speaks over the music.

MAN (V.O.)
Creation truly is the greatest
gift, isn't it?

A singular workstation with deluxe Captain's chair and two keyboards on separate arm rests sits empty in front of a series of more computers on the back wall.

The station sits in front of four large-panel monitors, each displaying their own world: lines of code scroll slowly upward on two, another displaying the 3-D printer parts, and DEATH METAL VIDEOS on another.

MAN (V.O.)
The ability to make something out
of nothing.

Now we see him. A tall, DARK-HAIRED MAN in a red button-down shirt and tight blue jeans walks around the room slowly and places the remote control and miniature component on the countertop.

He walks toward the end of the counter, STEPPING OVER something hidden out of view, and looks down on a clear plexiglass labyrinth with a white MOUSE inside.

The mouse traverses the maze perfectly, maneuvering each corner masterfully from beginning to end. Then it turns around and repeats the pattern, never taking a break.

MAN

So easily controlled, isn't he? A mouse in a cage.

He turns and looks up at the code scrolling on the monitor, the reflection of code caught in his CRYSTAL BLUE eyes.

MAN

But what happens when he's free?

He lifts the plexiglass maze straight up, careful not to disrupt the mouse. He sets it aside.

The mouse never misses a beat. Continues to repeat the pattern of the maze no longer there, from beginning to end, turns, then repeats. Back and forth. Over and over.

The Man smiles, chuckles. Turns and looks down.

DAVID CASTLE (31, goth, slim) sits up against the window, breathing heavily, his BLOOD SOAKED HAND pressed against his neck, where the handle of a TOOL sticks out. Their eyes meet.

DAVID

L...L...Lucian. Why?

The dark-haired man, LUCIAN (appears to be in late 20's and in perfect shape), looks back at the mouse on the countertop, then at David. Smiles.

LUCIAN

Not so easy to control now, is he?

Lucian picks up one of the remote controls on the countertop and points it at the mouse, who keeps running in a maze that no longer exists. He PUSHES a button.

The mouse stops MID-STEP. FROZEN in place, like suspended animation. Then line by line, like the opposite of the 3-D printer, DISAPPEARS.

The mouse is not real. It's a HOLOGRAM.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

SUPER: EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO

INT. JONAS BLAKE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The room is a disaster of dirty clothes, towels, papers and books strewn randomly across every possible object. A large lump of clothes on the bed MOVES.

The alarm clock suddenly SCREAMS to life, literally. The PIERCING shrill of blood-curdling, horror movie SHRIEKS repeat over and over.

The pile of clothes on the bed rolls over, as an arm surfaces slapping the top of the clock, shutting it up. JONAS BLAKE (29), a thin geek sits up and puts on his wire-frame glasses.

JONAS

Yeah, yeah. I'm up.

He reaches over to the bedside table and picks up the TV remote, turning on the news. Jonas gets out of bed and heads toward the kitchen, half-listening.

NEWS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...setting a new record for oil prices. Chinese officials report production delays as the primary cause as the U.S. continues to work diplomatically to ease pricing.

KITCHEN

The modest one-bedroom condo's kitchen is an exercise in post-dorm living. A week's worth of dishes sit in the sink. Jonas grabs the coffee pot and finds a space to fill it with water.

NEWS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

As oil prices continue to skyrocket, U.S. domestic output continues to decline, putting additional pressure on the administration to get the country's economy back on track.

Jonas gets the coffee going and heads into the bathroom, talking to himself in the mirror.

JONAS

Back on track, Jonas. Get it back
on track.

EXT. JONAS BLAKE'S CONDO - LATER

Coffee mug in hand and toast in mouth, Jonas heads toward the massive parking garage as a uniformed female police officer, SARAH PARKS (30), walks toward him. The morning ritual.

JONAS

(mumbling)

Morning, Officer Parks. Good shift?

She smiles and waves.

SARAH

Morning, Mr. Blake. Any shift where
I make it home is a good shift.

JONAS

See you tomorrow.

SARAH

Have a good day.

Jonas walks toward his car and peeks over his shoulder at Sarah. She's all business and never looks back. Jonas bumps into his car, spilling coffee down his shirt.

JONAS

Damn it!

He wipes his wet hand on his pants then places his index finger on a BLACK SQUARE on the driver's door. The BIO-SENSOR scans his finger, the door opens and the engine STARTS.

The car's female voice CHIMES in through the CAR MONITOR.

CAR MONITOR (V.O.)

Please state your destination.

JONAS

District A-14. Xenon Electronics.

CAR MONITOR (V.O.)

Xenon Electronics. Affirmative.
Engage manual drive.

Jonas puts the car in gear and glides it out of the parking complex and into the bustling street traffic.

EXT. XENON ELECTRONICS - LATER

His car glides up to the security gate, as Jonas lowers the window. An overweight GUARD steps outside toward the car with a barcode SCANNER.

Jonas hands him his badge. The guard scans it.

GUARD
Morning, Mr. Blake.

JONAS
Morning Charlie. Think it's going
to rain today?

GUARD
Anything is possible. See you
later, Mr. Blake.

The gates open and Jonas drives inside, waving at Charlie as he passes.

INT. XENON LABORATORY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A white MOUSE moves down the center lane of a labyrinth. It gets to the first turn. Stops. Makes the turn and continues.

Jonas watches the mouse intently, while David takes notes confidently.

The mouse gets to the next turn. Stops. Easily makes the turn and continues. It gets to an intersection. Stops. Then walks STRAIGHT into the wall.

Jonas looks at David. Frowns.

DAVID
Shit.

Unfazed, the mouse continues to walk straight into the wall. Not up the wall, INTO it. Its nose FLATTENS. Its face begins to DISAPPEAR as it forces itself into the maze wall.

JONAS
Three..two..one...

The mouse's entire body begins to FLICKER as it pushes into the wall, and then completely DISAPPEARS. It was a HOLOGRAM.

DAVID
You switched mazes on me!

JONAS

Your sequence is wrong. Again.

DAVID

Just hand me the Holobox and let me think a minute.

Jonas passes him the mouse's HOLOBOX, a handheld device that contains the hologram's microcomputer and laser generation systems, no bigger than a television remote control.

JONAS

And the chemistry still isn't strong enough.

DAVID

We checked the sequence already.

JONAS (CONT'D)

Well, check it again! I'll work with Rachel on the chemistry.

David takes the Holobox and presses a button.

Brilliant blue light SHOOTS out from an opening on the front of the box, and forms a mouse-shaped GRID on the table.

The grid FILLS with colors until a near perfect looking three-dimensional mouse appears. It walks exactly as programmed.

DAVID

If we went with my Auto-Learn Programming, the damn thing would be finished by now.

Jonas turns sharply to David.

JONAS

Drop it! Xenon isn't paying us to mess with your pet project. They're paying us to get our solid holograms to market!

David presses a button on the Holobox and DEGENERATES the mouse. It disappears immediately.

DAVID

No shit, Sherlock. Tell me something I don't know.

JONAS

Well for one thing, you don't know shit about business.

DAVID

You know how incredible A-L-P could be! How much programming time it would save. Tell them!

JONAS

Yeah, okay, you want me to tell the Board to expand the HELP project to include A-L-P, when we're already behind schedule, over budget, and can't get a stupid mouse through a fucking maze?!

David looks down.

JONAS (CONT'D)

In any case, I agree with them.

DAVID

What? How can you say-

JONAS

Think about it, genius. There is more business, more money, more profit when we create the programs, not our customers.

DAVID

Yeah, but-

JONAS

But nothing! Just stick with the programming, and let us boys upstairs handle the marketing.

DAVID

Who died and made you God, anyway?

Jonas gets in David's face.

JONAS

Graham did, so do what I say. It's time to grow up, we're not in college anymore. Now get with the program and get this done!

Jonas turns sharply and walks out of the lab. David flips him the bird while his back is turned.

DAVID

You'll get the program, all right.

He presses the Holobox and light BURSTS from the opening, forming the perfect looking mouse. David puts it in the maze and the mouse repeats the pattern as before.

It reaches the intersection as before, and begins to disappear FACE FIRST into the wall, again.

INT. JONAS'S OFFICE, XENON ELECTRONICS - LATER

Jonas walks past his cluttered desk littered with several half-opened Holobox modules, and stares at the computer in front of him.

A series of programs run in the background, while images of a HUMAN-LIKE GRID fills up in different colors.

TOM MAKO (32, spiked hair), his Asian/Australian chief mechanical engineer walks in behind him.

TOM

How did the latest sequence run?

JONAS

The chemistry isn't right, the programming is still off, but the mechanics of the box seem solid.

TOM

Well, one out of three ain't bad.

JONAS

The entire system is too unstable.

Tom walks around the desk behind Jonas, looks at the program on his computer, and puts his hand on Jonas's shoulder.

TOM

What does David say about it?

Jonas takes a deep breath and turns to face him, eye-to-eye.

JONAS

That asshole totally pisses me off!

TOM

Take a number.

JONAS

He keeps harping on his Auto-Learn idea and ignoring our deadlines. We're running out of time.

TOM
We've hit some roadblocks, but-

JONAS
This is different. Graham talked to me the other day.

TOM
That can't be good.

Jonas turns to one of the computers behind him and flips a clear paneled SEE-THROUGH MONITOR to HORIZONTAL, and starts up THE GALLERY, a 3-D holographic imaging system.

A computerized image of a man appears and begins to turn 360 degrees, then walks across the top of the monitor, moving its arms with grace and precision.

JONAS
He was asking a lot of questions about timeline. I tried to put him at ease, but he was real nervous, more than usual. Antsy. Not good.

Jonas turns to the monitor and runs a program sequence. The Gallery shows the figurine as it walks, bends, and reaches out as if lifting an object.

JONAS
I walked him through the Gallery. How close we are to achieving it.

TOM
Including the HELP infrastructure?

JONAS
Our Holographic Enhanced Labor Programs will do almost anything we program them to do. The marketing potential is endless. They would change the world.

Tom looks over Jonas's shoulder to the computer monitor, then back at Jonas.

TOM
It's not like we're doing something as simple as cloning.

JONAS
Tell me about it.

TOM
How's the latest solid model? Adam?

Tom reaches beside Jonas and picks up a Holobox, points it toward the open room and presses one of the buttons.

An ARRAY of lights SHOOT out of the control module four feet in front of them and display a perfectly formed, MALE FIGURE almost six feet in height. It is ADAM.

Tom walks over to the figure and places a small notebook in the figure's hands. It FLOATS on the surface of the light.

TOM (CONT'D)

Tell me that didn't blow him away.

JONAS

All he said was the board didn't invest a billion dollars for fake mice and fancy mannequins. Then more timeline questions. Again.

Tom shakes his head.

TOM

Bloody accountants.

Jonas turns to Tom, serious.

JONAS

We need a solution. And soon.

Tom takes a deep breath. Looks at Adam, then back at Jonas.

TOM

Well then, we best get to it.

INT. DAVID CASTLE'S OFFICE - LATER

David sits at his desk typing lines of code when there is a KNOCK at the door.

It opens, revealing CHARLES LESH (58, upper-crust professional), Xenon Board member and David's adopted Godfather. He enters.

CHARLES

Got a minute? It's important.

Without looking up, David waves him in. He continues to feverishly type code while he talks.

DAVID

Isn't it always? Jonas is all up in my shit, Tom is yanking me around, what's one more? Pile on.

Charles closes the door behind him and sits down, nervous and concerned.

CHARLES

There's a lot of buzz on the board.
We don't have much time left.

DAVID

So what? Another deadline. We've
been here before.

CHARLES

Not like this. I can't leverage any
more delays.

This gets David's full attention.

DAVID

What are you saying?

CHARLES

Look, David. We go way back. I
promised your parents I would look
after you when they passed-

DAVID

Spit it out, Charles.

CHARLES

Graham has a meeting with Pentagon
top brass today. I think they are
going to pull the plug.

DAVID

Like hell they are! Can't you sway
them with A-L-P?

CHARLES

If you had something bulletproof to
show me, you know I'd go to bat.
I'm just telling you what I know.

DAVID

You know my system is superior to
this puppet show that Jonas is
pushing, right?

CHARLES

It doesn't matter what you or I
think anymore, time is running out.

DAVID

How much time?

CHARLES

I don't kn-

DAVID

Guess, damn it!

CHARLES

Three weeks. A month, tops.

David pauses. Anguishes.

DAVID

Even if I didn't sleep for a month,
it's not enough time.

CHARLES

David, you know I support it, but
you can't postpone Adam any longer.

DAVID

Goddamn puppet.

CHARLES

Once you have A-L-P up and running,
I can get the majority of the board
behind me. Our time will come.

More anguish.

DAVID

Shit.

Charles gets up to leave and pauses at the door.

CHARLES

Good man. Convince Jonas you're
committed and get Adam done, and
then we'll have all the time, and
money, in the world.

INT. CEO GRAHAM'S OFFICE - LATER

A meeting already in progress, BILL GRAHAM (62, silver hair),
CEO of Xenon Electronics sits at an oak table with GENERAL
SEAN COLLINS (65, in full uniform) eyes stern, tone serious.

GENERAL COLLINS

I work for the U.S. Government,
Bill. Believe me, I understand
about being late and over-budget.

GRAHAM

So why the ultimatum now, when we're so close to the finish line.

GENERAL COLLINS

Bill, you've been 'close' for the past eighteen months. But it's just not close enough anymore.

GRAHAM

Buy us another month and I know Adam will be ready.

General Collins looks at him skeptically.

GENERAL COLLINS

I wish it were that simple. The Chinese have the upper-hand in the Middle East, the economy remains in the crapper, and the boys upstairs were counting on your tech to turn the tables on both issues.

GRAHAM

They still can, Sean. I'm telling you, give us until the end of the month to prove-

GENERAL COLLINS

I can buy you a couple weeks, but that's it.

Bill shakes his head.

GRAHAM

We're sitting on an indestructible fighting force and an unstoppable labor machine and I get two weeks?

GENERAL COLLINS

That's all I can promise.

Collins gets up from the table, ending the meeting. Bill follows him to the door.

GRAHAM

So it's all or nothing, then.

GENERAL COLLINS

If it's as close as you say, it won't be for nothing. Get it done.

Collins leaves as the stress on Bill's face amplifies. He walks over to his desk and taps the intercom.

GRAHAM

Janet, find Jonas and tell him to
get his ass up here.

INT. JONAS BLAKE'S OFFICE - LATER

Tom works with a HORIZONTAL HOLOGRAPHIC MONITOR showing a human figure manipulating objects when he calls outward to the empty office.

JONAS

ImMedia: Rachel Hastings.

The once blank wall FLICKERS to life as a three by four foot section morphs to show a HI-DEFINITION MONITOR. This is the ImMediaScreen. Fully interactive flat panel communications.

RACHEL HASTINGS (29), Xenon's Lead Chemist, appears on screen. She's smart, quick, and exhausted with bloodshot eyes amplified through her glasses.

INTERCUT BETWEEN RACHEL AND JONAS

RACHEL

Hey, Boss. Calling to tell me how wonderful I am?

JONAS

You wish. How's the new chemical formulation coming?

RACHEL

Dialing it in, but still have miles to go before we sleep.

JONAS

Mechanical is mostly set, and we only have two hurdles remaining, programming and chemistry. We need you now more than ever.

RACHEL

That's what they all say.

Rachel looks over her shoulder and barks orders.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Boss thinks you guys are slacking.
I need everyone on lockdown.

A group of collective groans in the background.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Okay, Boss. They're completely behind you. Buy them pizza and coffee and let's talk specifics in a few.

JONAS

Deal. You're the best, Rachel.

RACHEL

Not yet. But when I pull this off, make sure you let everyone know.

JONAS

You got it. Immedia-off.

Rachel's image disappears from the screen, and the wall CAMOUFLAGES back to match the surrounding area.

A KNOCK at the door. It's David.

DAVID

Jonas, about earlier...

Jonas looks up. Waves him over.

JONAS

Hey man, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have jumped all over you, it's just the pressure-

DAVID

I know, I get it. I came to apologize, too.

JONAS

Apologize?

David motions to sit. Jonas nods.

DAVID

Something you said earlier, it got me thinking. Remember our lab back at Stanford? The rat-hole?

JONAS

Can't believe that was only two years ago. Seems like a lifetime.

DAVID

I know, right? It was just the four of us. Side by side. We had a crazy idea to change the world.

JONAS
We're so close, I just know it.

DAVID
So anyway, you were right. We aren't in college anymore. It's not just the four of us. Everyone is counting on this.

Jonas nods.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Look, I've been a real dick lately, pushing my own agenda, my self-learning protocol, and I get it. Forget all that for now.

JONAS
That's big of you to say, man.

DAVID
I just wanted you to know I support you and we're in this together. And...to ask a favor.

JONAS
Uh...sure, what is it?

DAVID
Once we get Adam off the ground, if there's a place where A-L-P would be a fit, you'll let me pursue it.

JONAS
I don't know-

DAVID
Just hold on to it. Not now, but downstream. Once Adam has it's legs. I've never let you down, and knowing how smart you are, I know you'll find a fit.

JONAS
David, once we get Adam working, we'll all have a lot more time for personal projects. You help get Adam up, and we'll look at A-L-P when it's right.

David gets up and holds out his hand.

DAVID
Let's change the world.

Jonas looks at the hand and smiles. He clasps it and brings him in for a bro-hug.

JONAS
Let's do it.

The ImMediaScreen comes to life and interrupts the bro-love. It's JANET, Bill Graham's secretary.

JANET (V.O.)
Excuse me, Mr. Blake. Mr. Graham needs to see you right away. I'm keeping his schedule open for you.

JONAS
I'll be right up.

The wall morphs back to normal.

DAVID
Go get 'em.

JONAS
You too.

Jonas leaves. David smirks like a fox left in the henhouse.

INT. CEO GRAHAM'S OFFICE - LATER

Janet guides Jonas into Bill's office, closing the door behind her.

Bill motions for Jonas to take a seat.

GRAHAM
Jonas, when we brought your team on board, I know we set a very high bar for success.

JONAS
Nothing we weren't prepared for.

GRAHAM
No, but perhaps I didn't set the right motivation for achieving what we set out to do.

JONAS
Mr. Graham, I'm confused. The team is working non-stop on Adam, and like I showed you earlier-

Bill holds up his hand and stops Jonas.

GRAHAM

Let me be blunt. The success of Adam doesn't rest on your team. It rests solely on you.

JONAS

I take full responsibility for-

GRAHAM

Adam represents a tipping point in world economics and geo-politics. Which makes the bar I'm setting even harder.

JONAS

How so?

GRAHAM

An Executive level presentation of Adam is scheduled for two weeks from today. Either Adam is fully functional, or it's over.

Jonas stands quickly, slamming his hands on the desk.

JONAS

Two weeks?! Bill, that's imposs-

Bill silences him.

GRAHAM

Do NOT use that word in here!

JONAS

We need- I need more time.

GRAHAM

You don't have it. None of us do.

Bill's demeanor shifts.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

You tell me you're close. Now show me. Show our sponsors. I know you can do it. Two weeks.

A modern day steely-eyed, missile man glares back.

JONAS

I'll get it done.

END ACT ONE