

SHADOWLANDS

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VVVVRRRRROOOOOOOOMMMMM...

The sound of a car engine revving and WE ARE ON THE OPEN ROAD in a '69 PONTIAC GTO doing 200mph down an empty highway. Fastback styling, turbo-hydramatic, 350 horse power.

But there's something odd about the landscape - it's seems to be jittering unnaturally and lacking texture.

INT. PONTIAC GTO - DAY

The road speeds by in the reflection our driver's racing helmet - his hands on the wheel, the TACHOMETER IN THE RED.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

There's no time to notice much else before the GTO is RAMMED from behind, HIT HARD BY A POLICE BLACK AND WHITE.

GTO DRIVER
Cops? Really?

But it's too late, the black and white has pulled up alongside. The cop swerves his vehicle into the GTO, slamming it hard. This should feel odd to any sane driver.

GTO DRIVER (CONT'D)
You wanna play rough?

The GTO Driver pushes his foot down on the STEEL GAS PEDAL pushing the TACHOMETER INTO THE RED: 5,000 rpm.

And the GTO Driver SLAMS THE WHEEL, TURNING INTO THE BLACK AND WHITE HARD. The cruiser SWERVES all over the road, flying into the air, SPINNING OVER AND OVER in a barrel roll.

Then, as the GTO Driver is struggling to maintain control, we hear RING! and see a cell buzzing on the dash.

GTO DRIVER (CONT'D)
This is not a good time.

But he can't takes his hands off the wheel - his own car is doing doughnuts. But the phone won't stop ringing.

GTO DRIVER (CONT'D)
Awww, c'mon...

He's about to head into an ugly DITCH until-

TIME STOPS AND A FLASHING "PAUSE" SIGN COMES OVER THE SCREEN.

CUT TO:

INT. EDDIE'S STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Meet EDDIE BABBAGE. 22 years old. He lives at this computer, playing video games alone, chatting on IRC, and occasionally doing a little actual work. Annoyed that his game has been interrupted, he answers the phone.

EDDIE

This is Eddie... Yeah, who wants to know... My father? No, this must be a mistake- I haven't heard from him in years... He's what?... When did it happen?

Eddie sinks into his chair. His world spinning.

FADE TO BLACK

The screen slowly starts twinkling with pinpoints of light and we realize we are looking at THE STARS.

EXT. ROOF OF A PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Pan down to find Eddie STANDING AT THE EDGE of the roof, staring down at the city lights below. He's wearing a black suit with the collar button undone, no tie. An almost-empty bottle of scotch in one hand, an old photo of him and HIS FATHER, AARON, in the other.

EDDIE (V.O.)

A wise man once told me: the beginning of wisdom is found in doubt. And by doubt we come to question. And by seeking answers to those questions, we find truth.

Eddie steps to the edge, TEARS THE PHOTO IN HALF and tosses the pieces off the roof, where they float into the darkness.

EDDIE (V.O.)

But sometimes, when you least expect it, the truth seeks you.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Eddie walks up a hill towards a quiet funeral, where a casket is being lowered into the ground.

There is a large photo of Aaron, surrounded by flowers. The man in the picture wears glasses and has a real intelligence in his eyes but also a wild, untamed appearance: messy hair; rumpled shirt, suspenders wearing thin. You can almost tell from looking at him that the man was a scientific genius.

EDDIE (V.O.)

When my mother passed away, I was just a baby. After that, my father raised me by himself. Don't think he ever thought much about it. Just got up and did it.

Eddie glances at a tombstone -- *Professor Aaron Babbage, Oct. 2, 1951 - May 24, 2018. Beloved father and astrophysicist.*

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

INSERT: 8 YEARS AGO

YOUNGER EDDIE (14) is about to receive a trophy, standing in front of a huge banner: YOUNG VIDEO GAME DESIGNER CONFERENCE.

EDDIE (V.O.)

But he never knew quite what to make of me. He sat in the back row of every event in my life. Think he thought just being there was enough.

Smiling broadly, Eddie steps up to the platform to receive the trophy, shaking the hand of the nerdy-looking conference host. Eddie looks over to his father sitting in the audience, but Aaron's face is buried in his reading. Not impressed by Eddie's silly video game hobby.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY - PRESENT

Back to the funeral. A priest recites a typical sermon as Eddie listens quietly.

EDDIE (V.O.)

I never quite knew what to make of him, either. He was a certified genius, a child prodigy in his day.
(MORE)

EDDIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Put his whole life into attacking
 the one problem not even Einstein
 could solve: the Holy Grail of
 theoretical physics. The search
 for the basic principles that hold
 the universe together.

Eddie gets up and tosses in handful of dirt into the grave,
 which gapes like a dark black scar.

Push in on the black grave until it fills screen until-

A bright blue BOLT OF ELECTRICITY lights up a room and we
 find ourselves in -

INT. BABBAGE BASEMENT - NIGHT - 6 YEARS AGO

Wearing thick goggles, YOUNG EDDIE (16) and YOUNGER AARON
 (50s) are doing electromagnetic experiments in the basement,
 SPARKS FLYING FROM AN ENORMOUS TESLA COIL-LIKE MACHINE that
 takes up the entire basement.

Aaron putters around, getting ready for the final stage of
 the experiment. THE HUM OF A HOMEMADE PARTICLE ACCELERATOR
 winding up, going faster and getting louder.

While speaking, Aaron is showing Eddie the CONTROL PANEL.

YOUNG AARON
 Pay attention now, Edward. What we
 have spinning here is a couple
 carbon atoms, the building block of
 all life. And we're going to
 accelerate that to 25 thousand
 kilometers per second and *smash* it
 into two hydrogen atoms -- the most
 common element in the known
 universe -- in our little particle
 accelerator here. At the precise
 moment of contact, you are going to
 inject a large amount -- 7.04
 teravolts -- of negatively charged
 ions into the mix. Now it could be
 dangerous, but this is history in
 the making.

Eddie looks completely terrified and overwhelmed, and as
 Aaron lowers his goggles to his face, Eddie does the same.

YOUNG AARON (CONT'D)
 You ready? Here we go.

Aaron's hair starts to STAND ON END as he RAISES THE ACCELERATOR SPEED. The machine gets even louder.

YOUNG AARON (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Hold. Hold...

He gets all the way to the MAX SPEED and yells to Eddie.

YOUNG AARON (CONT'D)
NOW, EDWARD!

Eddie turns the knob up all the way and the SPARKS EVERYWHERE START GOING CRAZY. Eddie's eyes go wide - terrified.

But Aaron is overjoyed, looking at the data on a monitor.

YOUNG AARON (CONT'D)
IT'S WORKING! My god! Do you know
what this means? Move over,
Einstein, here we come!

But he's spoken too soon. Because something strange is happening. The machine starts to SHAKE and CRACK.

At one end of the machine, a small BLACK HOLE opens up in the air and immediately starts VIOLENTLY SUCKING EVERYTHING not tied down in the basement lab into it's center - like a plane at 50,000 feet that's had the window punctured.

Eddie is holding onto a desk for dear life, his feet practically off the floor. Aaron grabs a rope and ties himself to a desk so he can move closer to the BLACK HOLE.

YOUNG EDDIE
DAD, WHAT'S HAPPENING?

But Aaron can't hear him over the FURY OF THE STORM that's been unleashed in their basement.

Fascinated, Aaron moves to the black hole, and slowly sticks his hand in. He tries to take it back out, but he's stuck - like something has a hold of him from the other side and won't let go.

YOUNG AARON
My hand. I can't get it out!

YOUNG EDDIE
WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Eddie thinks fast, reaches for the knob and turns off the voltage, but it's too late. The machine is about to blow!

Eddie grabs Aaron and pulls him away from the machine, diving to the floor as the Tesla Coil EXPLODES in a HUGE BLAST.

Aaron lifts his head up -- dazed, covered in dust and soot.

YOUNG EDDIE (CONT'D)

Dad, you okay? Dad?

But Aaron is not okay. He looks down at his hand - or at least, where his hand used to be. Now there is just a perfectly clean stump.

YOUNG AARON

It's real. Edward, it's real. We have created a portal to another dimension.

Eddie doesn't know what to think. All he can see is that despite the fact his father is missing his freaking arm, he seems to have a huge smile on his face, hair standing up straight like he stuck his finger in an electrical socket, a maniacal, dream-come-true excitement in his eyes...

END TEASER