

Hell's Gate

Season One - Episode Sixteen

"The Puppet Master"

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(Based on characters and situations created
by Joss Whedon and Mutant Enemy Productions)

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TEASER

INT. MACROWARE OFFICES - JON BATES'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Picking up right where our last episode left off, JON BATES stands, eyes locked on the man standing across from him, MITCH PETERSON. Jon is terrified, and for good reason-- Mitch's eyes are GLOWING RED.

This is not the Mitch we've seen before. Instead of his usual, charmingly dorky slumping posture and demeanor, he now stands perfectly straight, far more confident than he's ever been.

JON

You?

MITCH

Me. Me me me me, me.

JON

You're the... what should I call you, evil mastermind? You're causing all this... weirdness?

MITCH

Oh, not all of it. But a big chunk...

(deeply satisfied)

Oh, yes.

JON

Why are you ding this?

Mitch LAUGHS.

MITCH

Jon. My dear old friend. Oh, how confused you must be. Here you sit, day after day, in your big chair, behind your nice desk, while all the people out there do your work.

(nostalgic)

I was like you, once. Not, you know, with an office, or anything. But I was in charge of people.

He looks away, starts pacing back and forth, thinking.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I had my own world. My own entire world. I was a king. A god! The Supreme Being in all the land, that glorious other dimension.

Having come to Jon's wall, he begins touching each of the individual photos hanging up.

MITCH (CONT'D)

But they-- my "dear" subjects-- didn't like me, very much. Which seems funny now; when I came here, everyone liked me. What does that say about your world, Jon?

(waves his hand)

But that a discussion for another day. When my subjects decided how much they didn't like me, do you know what they did?

He turns back to Jon.

MITCH (CONT'D)

They rose up against me. Defeated me and my cowardly, useless armies. Banished me here.

(contemptuous laugh)

Here! In this disgusting form.

He indicates his body with a wave of his hand.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Small and weak and flabby and bald! They made me bald! And then they locked the portal back to my world!

(deep, calming breath)

But they didn't realize that I had a few tricks up my sleeve.

Turning back around, he more closely inspects a particular photograph-- one of he and Jon, standing in front of the freshly broken ground of the MacroWare office.

Jon takes advantage of Mitch's lapse of attention to reach for the shiny silver letter opener on his desk. He quickly snatches it up and prepares to throw it.

Suddenly Mitch stops, spins toward Jon, and violently jerks his own arm to the side. GASPING, Jon's arm likewise jerks to the side, the letter opener flying from his hand.

JON

(stunned)

What-- how did you--

Mitch gives a cruel smile and closes his hand into a fist. At that same moment Jon's mouth locks shut.

MITCH

Listen to me, and I will explain!

He moves towards Jon, fist clenched.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Unknown to those insulant fools who banished me here, I still had some power left. A small amount, but it was enough to... let's say... fold reality. To create something I could use to go back to my home. And it wasn't some stupid Stargate thing, either.

Mitch realizes Jon will not get the reference.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Oh, right, you just employ the nerds. Okay, it's simple. Out of thin air, I created... this.

He spreads his arms to indicated the MacroWare building.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Out of thin air, I created... you.

Jon can't believe it. He'd gasp, his mouth would drop open in shock, he'd start denying it, but Mitch keeps his mouth firmly closed with his fist. Jon's face betrays his confusion and terror.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Do you know how hard it is to manufacture forty years of a person's life down to the smallest detail and then integrate it into actual reality? It ain't easy, Jon! Your first pet. Your first day at school. The first time you touched yourself in that "special way".

(tapping his head)

All from here. I guess you could say, that I am your father.

Mitch relaxes his fist, to allow Jon to speak. Jon's mouth snaps open.

JON

That's not true!

MITCH
 Search your feelings, Luke!
 (beat; amused)
 Sorry, couldn't resist that one.

JON
 You... created me?
 (with disgust)
 I'm your puppet? Why?

MITCH
 (sighing)
 I had hoped to avoid this part.

Mitch takes a step closer to Jon.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 Simple. When the beta of our new operating system is released next week, millions of computers will download it. And once installed, the beta will link them all into one giant super computer- a computer with enough computational power to open a string of portals whose combined gravimetric mass will punch a hole in this dimension back to my world.
 (beat)
 Okay, well, it's not really simple.

JON
 (shaking his head)
 No. I'll cancel the launch, Mitch. I'll cancel it, and we'll destroy the OS and you'll never be able to--

Mitch raises his hand again. Jon freezes, stops talking. His arms at his sides like a soldier at attention.

MITCH
 You aren't going to do any of that, Jon. Come on. Think, McFly! Do you really think I'd tell you my master plan if there was even the slightest chance of you affecting its outcome?
 (beat)
 Oh, wow, I'm just spouting off the geek-talk today, aren't I?

He spreads his fingers apart like a puppeteer with the strings. Jon's limbs spread slightly apart to match the movement.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You're going to do exactly as I say. Because you can't do anything else.

With his other hand, Mitch makes the scissors from a game of Rock, Paper, Scissors. Moving the hand-scissors to the position under his other hand where the imaginary puppet strings are, he pantomimes cutting them. Instantly Jon falls to the ground in a crumpled heap. Mitch kneels down over him.

MITCH (CONT'D)

So, do you see, Jon? I own you. You're mine. Now, let me tell you what you're going to do. You're going to find Corrine, and her little... friends, and you're going to convince them to let you join. And you're going to tell me--
(babytalk:)
Evevy widdle thing they do! Yes you are! Yes you are!

He grins, baring his teeth. Jon lays on the ground, expressionless, soaking in his commander's words.

BLACKOUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. FRANK'S DINER - MORNING.

VI and TAMSIN enter the diner. FRANK is wiping down the counter, like usual.

VI

...and he was so funny!

TAMSIN

Wait, funny like the way Mike is, funny like the way MadTV tries to be, or funny like a sad clown?

VI

Uh... not any of those. He didn't tell knock-knock jokes or anything but he wasn't as sarcastic as Mike is. He just has a very interesting way of looking at things.

(beat)

And he's so cute!

Frank looks up at them.

FRANK

What are you ladies talking about?

VI

I had a date last night! Frank, it was amazing!

She rushes the counter.

VI (CONT'D)

Oh, Frank, he--

FRANK

Whoa! Who's "he"?

VI

Rick, from the bar. Anyway, he was great! He really likes me and he told me how great he thinks I am and I think he's great too! And we're probably going to go out again, and we had a really good time!

(beat)

Except when we got attacked by vampires, that wasn't very fun.

FRANK
Wait! Vampires?

VI
Yeah, but it's okay. Corrine helped me kill them.

FRANK
You just happened to run in to Corrine?

VI
Oh, no, she was at Chucky's, too.

FRANK
Why?

VI
She was on a date with her boss, that Jon guy.

FRANK
Hmmm.

VI
What?

FRANK
Nothing. Nothing. So you went on a date with a bartender, huh?

VI
(swooning)
It was magical.

FRANK
(looks into distance)
I knew a bartender, once. Back in, was it Fiji? Musta been Fiji. Anyway, what he'd do is, he'd take women up to his apartment, right? And tell them all these sweet stories about how they were meant to be together. And then they'd have sex, you know, and she'd wake up in a tub of ice in a back alley, missing a kidney. Just stole the kidneys right out of women.
(looks back at Vi)
So, you know, be careful.

Vi looks to Tamsin, who laughs lightly and shrugs.

VI

You're not going to ruin this for me. I'm going upstairs to lay in bed with my happy.

She hurries upstairs before Frank can bring her down anymore. Tamsin sits at the counter across from Frank.

TAMSIN

(amused)

What was that?

FRANK

What?

TAMSIN

Were you trying to scare her away from that boy?

FRANK

Ridiculous.

He begins scrubbing the bar furiously.

TAMSIN

Aww, you're being protective! Big ol' Papa Bear, trying to keep the cubs safe.

FRANK

Shut up.

TAMSIN

Oh, I think it's sweet.

Frank swats at her with his cloth as MIKE and LON descend the stairs, laughing. Lon has his arm around Mike but as soon as he sees the other two downstairs he draws it back.

LON

Hello, you two...

TAMSIN

Hello, you two, yourself.

FRANK

You're here early, Lon.

(jokingly)

What did you do, spend the night?

Lon turns to Mike for help, but Mike just crosses his arms and grins.

LON
Of course not! I did go home, but
then I... came back.

FRANK
("tell me more")
Obviously.

LON
It was, uh, to help Mike with his
schoolwork.

TAMSIN
What do you know about art?

LON
I know quite a bit about art, thank
you very much!

Mike sits down at the counter.

MIKE
Where's Vi? I want to get the scoop
on her date with hunky-ab-man.

FRANK
She went upstairs. You must have
just missed her.

TAMSIN
Frank got all father-like.

Lon looks relieved that the conversation has shifted away
from him.

MIKE
Do tell!

TAMSIN
He was very grumpy about this
bartender boy. Don't trust them, he
was saying. I could see it in his
eyes.

LON
(too bitter)
Ah, fathers. Is there no moment
they can't ruin?

He sits down beside Mike. Tamsin gives him a pained look, a
"Don't go there, please," look. Lon turns away from her.

FRANK

Look, okay? I was not being "fatherly." I was just trying to make sure she didn't get her heart broken by some leather jacket-wearing Fonzie wannabe.

Mike reaches over the counter and pats Frank's arm.

MIKE

It's okay, big guy. We won't tell anyone you have emotions... and no new pop culture references since 1979.

He pulls away from Frank and entwines his hand with Lon's, which is resting on the counter top. Lon squeezes for a second, but then freezes and turns to Mike, scared. Mike realizes his mistake and jerks his hand back immediately, jumping up as if he just touched a hot stove. He looks around to see if anyone noticed.

Frank is, of course, oblivious, waging a war with a smidgen of grime, unnoticeable to anyone else, on his counter. But Tamsin has her eyebrow raised, having clearly caught scent. She opens her mouth to speak but Mike quickly interrupts her.

MIKE (CONT'D)

(standing)

Well, I'd better get upstairs. Get ready for class.

LON

Bye.

TAMSIN

(teasing)

Good bye.

Frank GRUNTS as Mike goes upstairs. Tamsin smiles to herself as we:

FADE TO:

EXT. HEAVEN'S GATE PUBLIC PARK - AFTERNOON

Lon sits on a park bench, reading a newspaper. PIGEONS mill about at his feet. He tilts the paper down and glares.

LON

Shoo.

(beat)

Go away.

(MORE)

LON (CONT'D)
(another beat)
Ridiculous creatures.

Mike VAULTS over the bench, landing in a seated position beside Lon.

MIKE
Hey. Whatcha doin'?

LON
You're late. And nothing. These...
birds won't leave me alone.

MIKE
Aww, they think you're Mary
Poppins.

LON
Well, it is very annoying.

The two sit in new-couple silence for a moment.

MIKE
Why'd you freak this morning?

LON
You almost gave everything away!

MIKE
No one caught on. And you acted
like I stabbed your man-tackle with
a fork.

Lon grimaces.

LON
Must you always be so crude?

MIKE
I ain't dainty.

LON
We just have to be more careful in
the future, is all.

MIKE
By "we" you mean me.

LON
Well. Yes. Actually.

Mike rolls his head back over the bench.

MIKE

You know, this sneaking around was fun for a while, but it's getting old.

LON

But we agreed. The team--

MIKE

I think the team can handle it. It's you who has the problem.

Lon frowns.

MIKE (CONT'D)

You seriously need to lighten up, babe. Why can't you just leave the three-piece in the closet and relax every once in a while?

Lon grins ruefully and glances off into the distance.

FADE TO:

INT. TRAVERS HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

A YOUNG LON sits in chair in the study, playing a SONG on the VIOLIN. He is very concentrated on the song, as he plays the beautiful piece of music with the talent of someone many years his senior.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Lon! Lon?!

TITLE OVER: 1987.

QUENTIN TRAVERS enters the study, looking around.

QUENTIN

Ah, Lon. Don't you listen?

But Lon doesn't seem to hear, or if he does he doesn't acknowledge. He's focused on playing.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

(shouting)

Lon!

He reaches out and RIPS the violin from Lon's hands. Lon looks up, outraged.

YOUNG LON

What the--

But the boy's anger quickly fades to something more akin to fear as he realizes who he's speaking to.

YOUNG LON (CONT'D)
(meekly)
Oh. Er. Hello, father.

QUENTIN
How many times do I have to call you, boy?

YOUNG LON
I'm sorry, I didn't hear you.

QUENTIN
That much is obvious. Who could hear anyone over this racket?

He waves the violin about by the neck to demonstrate his point. Lon winces at the rough treatment of the instrument.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)
And selective hearing is not all this thing has caused, is it?

YOUNG LON
I don't know what you mean.

QUENTIN
I got a report from your school.

He stands up, begins pacing, the angry dad schtick. Lon frowns.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)
Imagine my surprise when I learned that you were not, in fact, excelling in all your classes as I was led believed.

Lon does not seem to attempt to imagine.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)
Imagine further my surprise when I asked for your tests so I could see for myself the work you were doing in school.

Quentin reaches into his jacket's inside pocket and removes a folded piece of paper. He unfolds it and passes it to Lon.

ANGLE ON the paper. It's one of Lon's tests. He did not do well-- red correction marks cover the page and it's obvious he failed. CIRCLED IN RED is a very short musical SCORE. Lon's been composing instead of caring about math.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)
What, pray tell, is that?

He indicates the circled score.

YOUNG LON
(beat; reluctantly)
I'm... sorry.

QUENTIN
(mockingly)
Sorry? Oh, well, that changes everything. This failing mark magically disappears now that you're sorry.

Quentin tosses the test into the roaring fireplace.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)
Not only has your schoolwork suffered, so have your... alternative studies. You haven't studied your demon languages all week. Your books are literally covered in dust.

LON
They're old books, they're always covered in--

Quentin gives Lon a stern eye. Lon hangs his head, shameful-- or angry.

QUENTIN
There will be no more frivolous musical training, do you understand? Not until you can prove to me that you can handle a... hobby with all of your other duties.

He takes the violin with him as he leaves the room. When the door SLAMS behind him, Lon covers his face with his hands and begins to sob.

FADE TO:

INT. MACROWARE OFFICES - JON BATES'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

CORRINE sits in her usual place, across the desk from Jon. They're mid-discussion. Possibly talking about their date?

JON

I really think I should meet them.

CORRINE

I understand, Jon, but it's really not my place.

So, not talking about their date.

JON

I know, I know. It's just--

(sighs)

I can't sit here now with the knowledge that I have. It's too much...

(shaking his head)

I can't explain it.

CORRINE

(gently)

I understand. I felt the same way, when I found out. It's like sitting around doing nothing, while out there--

(motions out the window)

--monsters and mutants are killing human beings in the dark, is just as bad as helping them.

Jon nods, silent, eyes sunken. Corrine looks away.

CORRINE (CONT'D)

I couldn't take it. I wasn't strong enough, so I walled that part of myself off.

(beat)

I'm sorry I pushed you away, Jon.

He gives Corrine a bittersweet smile. He shakes his head.

JON

No, Corrine. Don't blame yourself. I let you push me away. I should have been there for you. I should have--

Corrine reaches across the desk and puts her hands on top of Jon's.

CORRINE

We've both made mistakes. Maybe we can put them behind us and move on. Together.

Jon smiles. He turns his hands to hold hers. Corrine smiles warmly in return.

CORRINE (CONT'D)

Okay. I'll take you.

JON

Take me?

CORRINE

To meet the team.

She stands up. He rises too, ever the gentleman.

JON

Thank you.

CORRINE

No problem. After work?

JON

Sure. Yeah.

Corinne nods, smiles, and walks out the door. As the door comes SWINGING CLOSED, we catch a glimpse of Mitch sitting in the outer office, STARING INTENTLY at Jon.

The door CLOSES. Jon collapses in his chair, head bowed in his hands.

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. TRAVERS HOUSE - FRONT LAWN - DAY

A CAR parks in the large house's driveway. The door opens and Quentin Travers steps out.

TITLE OVER: 1988.

As soon as Quentin is out of the car, the FRONT DOOR of the house opens. A young Lon shyly emerges, holding a test in his hand.

YOUNG LON
Good afternoon, Father.

Quentin meets Lon halfway up the path to the door, but brushes by. He MUMBLES.

QUENTIN
And to you.

INT. TRAVERS HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Quentin removes his coat and tosses it on the peg by the door. Lon is practically riding his father's heels as he tries to be noticed.

YOUNG LON
I, er, have something to show you.

QUENTIN
In a moment.

Quentin proceeds through the house. We FOLLOW him, along with Lon, finally arriving:

INT. TRAVERS HOUSE - STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Quentin moves to the bookshelves on the walls and begins scanning them. Lon is clearly too eager to wait.

YOUNG LON
Uh, father--

But Quentin's far too focused on finding his book.

QUENTIN
I know, I know I had it here...

YOUNG LON
Excuse me...

He unfolds the paper he's holding.

ANGLE ON the paper. It's a test, of course. The exact opposite of the kind of test we saw previously-- there are few red marks on the page, excepting check marks, of which there are many. A note at the top of the page reads "Excellent."

BACK TO SCENE. Lon's clearly eager to show his father what he's accomplished, as he's standing directly underfoot.

Too underfoot, as it turns out. Quentin, in his focused search, doesn't notice that his son is standing right next to him. As he turns to reach over the next shelf, he TRIPS over Lon's feet and FALLS to the ground.

YOUNG LON (CONT'D)

Oh!

Furious, Quentin leaps to his feet, dusting himself off. He then rounds on Lon.

QUENTIN

What the bloody hell is the matter with you?

YOUNG LON

I'm sorry, I--

QUENTIN

Why don't you just watch where you're going?

YOUNG LON

I didn't mean--

QUENTIN

You could at least pretend like you're good at something, boy!

He STORMS OUT of the study. Lon stands there for a moment, on the verge of tears, before leaving as well. We PAN DOWN to the floor, where Lon's test lies in a crumpled ball.

FADE TO:

INT. LON'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DUSK

The bedroom is immaculate, with large bookshelves, an oak desk, a dresser, and a queen-sized bed. Normally, the bed would be made, but at this moment the blankets and sheets are ruffled. This is because Lon and Mike are currently in it, undressed. Mike rests his head on Lon's chest. Lon, of course, looks preoccupied with thought.

MIKE
What are you thinking about?

LON
Nothing. It-- nothing.

Mike raises up slightly.

MIKE
Hey, come on. You can tell me.

LON
Just...
(beat)
How did your father react? When you
told him you were gay.

Mike LAUGHS and slides off Lon, leaning up on his elbow.

MIKE
It was no big deal.

LON
Really?

MIKE
Yeah. Of course, ours wasn't what
you might call a normal situation.

LON
What do you mean?

MIKE
Well, when I did finally come out
to him, he was feeling really
guilty about something. So it kind
of... it was like absolution for
him. If he could accept my... this--
(waves hand down the bed)
--then he could finally forgive
himself.

LON
What did he do?

MIKE
(matter-of-factly)
Beat the holy Hell out of me.

Lon sits up, back against the headboard of the bed.

LON
What?!

MIKE
To be fair, it wasn't his fault.

LON
He was...?

Lon raises his eyebrows to indicate subtext, but Mike doesn't follow.

Lon does the standard Drunk Pantomime, hand tipping an imaginary bottle into his open mouth, bobbing his head around and waving his arms.

MIKE
Huh?

LON
(very, very quietly;
cautiously)
Drunk?

Mike chuckles.

MIKE
Oh. No, man. Nothing like that.

LON
Good.

MIKE
It was magic.

LON
I beg your pardon.

MIKE
Yeah. The place we lived... well,
see, weird stuff had a tendency to
happen.

LON
And magical parental abuse was on
that list?

MIKE
I'm kind of sketchy on the details,
but it had something to do with
Hansel and Gretel, only they turned
out to be this tall demon dude who
turned a lot of the town folk into
homicidal maniacs on a witch hunt,
including Pops. And since I was a
practicing Wiccan...

(beat)
(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

I was in the hospital for a couple of weeks.

Lon's face shows his sadness.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Concussion, broken ribs. When I got out, we moved back to San Francisco.

He cuddles up beside Lon, the pain of the memories a bit too much.

MIKE (CONT'D)

My dad took it pretty hard. I mean, most people did, but he...

(sniffs)

His dad was an abuser. His mom... anyway, he'd always swore he'd never do anything like that. Even though it was out of his control, he felt like he'd failed himself. And, I guess, he felt like he'd failed me. So he jumped at the chance to show me that he really did love me, no matter what.

Lon nods.

LON

That must have been nice.

Mike frowns. Lon understands his confusion.

LON (CONT'D)

Not the beating, obviously. The having a father who didn't care that-- that wasn't ashamed of you.

MIKE

It was. You know what? It really was. My dad was great. All the kids at school would complain about their parents, how oppressive they were, and I'd think, Really? I must have lucked out, then.

Lon shifts, uncomfortable. Mike notices.

MIKE (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

LON

Nothing.

MIKE

Your dad? You don't talk about him much. I know you didn't get along.

Lon chuckles hollowly at Mike's understatement.

LON

Oh, he... he was quite a man.

The couple sit in silence, Lon rubbing Mike's bare arm. Then:

LON (CONT'D)

So, when you say your father jumped to show you--

MIKE

For my eighteenth birthday he bought me a box full of sex toys.

LON

(mortified)

Oh, dear God.

MIKE

Yeah, that was an, uh, awkward party. Especially with nana there.

Lon LAUGHS. Mike watches him, and SMILES. They look warmly at each other. Lon brushes a stray lock of hair out of Mike's face.

LON

I love you.

Mike's smile widens as he lifts the covers over their heads.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S DINER - EARLY EVENING

TYLER sits at a booth, reading "Foundation" by Isaac Asimov. Vi is refilling the salt shakers at the counter. THE DOOR OPENS and Jon and Corrine enter.

CORRINE

Hey, Vi. Frank around?

VI

I think. I'll go check.

She puts the salt shakers down and heads through the kitchen, exiting. Tyler turns around in his seat, sees Jon, and jumps up.

TYLER
Hey, uh, dude, I mean, sir.

JON
(to Corrine)
Tyler?!

CORRINE
(shrugs)
He lives here.

TYLER
What's going on?

Corrine and Jon share a look.

CORRINE
Jon knows.

TYLER
About...

JON
Lions and tigers and bears.

It takes Tyler a minute, but the spark of revelation crosses his face.

TYLER
(to Corrine)
You told him?

CORRINE
He saw some vampires! I was supposed to reach into my pocket, pull out a neuralizer, and flash his brain away?

TYLER
First of all, that would have been wicked cool. Second, I am SO rubbing off on you.

Corrine rolls her eyes. Jon steps forward.

JON
So all this time, two of my employees have been working for me, despite knowing that my company is behind some great paranormal conspiracy?

TYLER

For me, it's really a James Bond thing. Undercover ops. Wetwork. Plus, I get dental.

JON

(beat)

And I actually hired you?

Before Tyler can answer, Frank and Tamsin emerge from the kitchen with Vi behind them.

FRANK

Hey, what's up?

He realizes that he has no clue who Jon is.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(to Corrine)

Who's Mr. Square-jaw?

CORRINE

You don't recognize him?

FRANK

Should I?

TYLER

Frank, come on, he's been on Time Magazine like six times. Business Weekly, Tech Monthly...

FRANK

Look, if it doesn't have a gun, a car, a foxy lady, or a foxy lady holding a gun or sitting on car on the cover, Frank doesn't read it.

Tyler GROANS.

TYLER

(muttering)

That's good, that's nice, let the boss meet the family, promotion in no time.

FRANK

(to Corrine)

What's going on?

CORRINE

This is Jon Bates. The, uh, CEO of MacroWare. My boss. Tyler's boss.

Frank appraises the man suspiciously.

FRANK

The guy you went on that date with.

Corrine shoots Vi a "Don't Tell Frank These Things!" look. Vi shrugs.

CORRINE

Right. Yes. Okay. He's here because he wants to help us.

FRANK

With what?

CORRINE

Our MacroWare problem, Frank.

Frank clenches his jaw, obviously not happy.

FRANK

You told him about that?

TYLER

Been there, not worth the trip.

Frank ignores Tyler and glares at Corrine.

FRANK

So we're just trusting whoever nowadays? I saw a guy living in a dumpster on my way back from the hardware store yesterday. How 'bout I go grab him, invite him into the base, hmm? Maybe let him play with the sphere?

JON

(to Corrine)

Sphere?

Corrine is now clearly agitated at Frank.

CORRINE

(to Jon)

Don't worry about it.

(to Frank)

Look, he knows, okay? So we can either trust him and have him on our side, or kick him out and hope that he doesn't decide to spout off about the crazies who run the diner to anyone who'll listen.

Frank rubs his temples with his fingertips, frustrated.

FRANK

Okay. Okay, fine, fine, fine! I think it's real sad that Vi-- Vi-- can keep a secret from her date, but you spill our entire story to your guy.

VI

What's that supposed to mean?

Tamsin nudges her and puts a finger to her lips-- shh!

FRANK

(calms down)

Yeah, fine. Welcome to Omega Team, Jon-Boy.

JON

Is that gonna be like... my call-sign, now? 'Cause I'd really like a different one.

TYLER

We're not fighter pilots.

Jon glares at Tyler: I sign your paychecks!

CORRINE

(to Jon)

Calm down, you aren't the boss here.

FRANK

Right. I'm the boss here. And we do things my way. What I say goes, got me?

JON

Yes, Captain.

Frank rolls his eyes, but continues.

FRANK

Now, let me introduce you to the rest of the team.

As Frank directs Jon's attention to Tamsin, we:

CUT TO:

EXT. HEAVEN'S GATE PUBLIC PARK - NIGHT

The park-- or this section, at least-- is empty. It's a small clearing, with few trees and lush green grass. As we arrive on the scene, one of the SWIRLING MYSTIC PORTALS slowly opens and grows in size, until finally it's large enough to allow its passenger entry.

The MONSTER that leaps out of the portal is a quadruped, orange-furred, all sinew and muscle, with a lethal-looking horn which hooks at the tip on its forehead. Its hands and feet are like clubs, no claws. It HOWLS, high-pitched and warbly.

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. FRANK'S DINER - NIGHT

Frank is wrapping up the introductions, currently introducing Jon to Tamsin.

FRANK
...usually has a brother.

Frank looks around the diner.

FRANK (CONT'D)
I don't know where he is.

He looks at Tamsin, questioningly. Tamsin shrugs.

TAMSIN
Haven't the foggiest.

FRANK
Oh, well. And then there's Mike,
he's kind of a linchpin.

Frank again looks around the diner.

FRANK (CONT'D)
(annoyed)
Tyler! Where the hell is Mike?

TYLER
(shrugging)
What, I've got a GPS planted on
him?

Annoyed, Frank furrows his brow.

FRANK
(to himself)
Everyone I know is useless.

Tyler looks about to retort, but as he opens his mouth the BASE ALARMS begin to SCREAM. Frank turns to Jon.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Time for you to see us in action.

He leads the team back into the kitchen, to the command center. Corrine drags a nervous Jon along by the arm.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMAND CENTRAL - CONTINUOUS

Tamsin and Frank beat the others to the cave, and Tamsin takes a computer terminal, going to work on it. Frank stands over her shoulder.

FRANK
What's going on?

TAMSIN
Portal opening.

FRANK
Where at?

TAMSIN
I'm working on it.

FRANK
Well, don't screw around.

Jon, Corrine, Vi, and Tyler enter as well. Jon is astonished as he takes in the vast cave.

JON
What the hell?

CORRINE
It's their base. The computers monitor supernatural activity.

She points to where the sphere is located.

CORRINE (CONT'D)
And through there is the sphere they were talking about. It's kind of a magical... thing.

JON
Right... This is a lot to take in.

Corrine pats him on the shoulder.

TAMSIN
(shouting)
Got it!

FRANK
Where?

TAMSIN
The park. I'm sending the coordinates to my mobile. Let's go.

The gang rushes out of the command center. Jon is a few paces behind, very out of his element.

FRANK
Vi, call Mike and Lon, tell them
both to meet us there!

VI
Aye, aye, sir!

Jon stops Corrine.

JON
So they're, what, Navy?

CORRINE
You're so cute when you're
confused.

She turns and runs out, leaving him to follow, lost.

CUT TO:

EXT. HEAVEN'S GATE PUBLIC PARK - NIGHT

The team, now with Mike and Lon, are spread out, searching the woods for whatever came out of the portal. Tyler and Mike are walking together.

TYLER
The portal was already closed when
we got here. Are we sure something
came through it?

Mike nods.

MIKE
According to Lon.

TYLER
I noticed you two pull up in his
car. What were you guys doing
together?

MIKE
(smooth)
He saw me walking down the street
and offered me a ride. That's when
we got the call.

Accepting Mike's excuse, Tyler nods.

TYLER
That's cool.

A guilty look crosses Mike's face. He grabs Tyler's arm causing him to stop walking.

MIKE
 (looks around)
 Look. I gotta tell you something
 but you have to swear not to--

He's interrupted by the SHRIEK of the Monster.

MIKE (CONT'D)
 (pointing)
 That way!

Tyler nods and the two run off.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY PARK - COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

A clearing in the park, with an elaborate stone water fountain, some wood benches arranged in a circle around the fountain, and the very angry Monster, growling and snapping, looking for something to eat. The entire team meets up across the courtyard from the Monster, which doesn't appear to notice them.

Upon seeing the Monster, Jon's eyes try to leap out of his skull and hop a plane to Bermuda.

JON
 What in the hell is that thing?

CORRINE
 It's, uh... Lon?

LON
 Uh, yes, well, that would appear to be a demon? Of some kind? Indeed, yes.

FRANK
 You're a big giant help. That's a good use of the taxpayers' dollars.

MIKE
 You mean there's a paycheck for this crap?

VI
 You couldn't really call it that.

Jon leans in to Corrine.

JON

Are they always this... casual?
About monsters and things?

CORRINE

It's a skill they've cultivated.
Helps them deal with, you know, the
horrors of the job. At least that's
my theory.

(beat)

I mean, it's a lot better than
thinking I've aligned myself with a
pack of psychopathic nutjobs.

Jon is not reassured.

TAMSIN

How should we deal with this thing?

LON

Well, until I figure out what it
is, I won't know how to kill it
properly.

FRANK

I'm a proponent of the Brute Force
approach. Mike.

MIKE

Yeah?

FRANK

Light 'er up.

Mike grins and lets loose with his trademark BLUE ENERGY BOLTS. They SLAM into the side of the Monster, sending it flying through the air. It lands on the ground, HOWLS, and turns on the team, charging.

FRANK (CONT'D)

All right, guys. Spread out and
let's go to work.

Corrine grabs Jon's arms.

CORRINE

Stay here. Stay safe.

JON

But--

CORRINE

Please!

JON

All right.

She smiles and runs off to join the team in the fight.

The Monster is running like a horse at the nearest person, who happens to be Vi. She rolls out of the way before it can impale her on its horn, and let's all stay away from the symbolic analysis of that, please. The Monster tries to stomp her with its hoof, but Vi grabs it and twists, eliciting a wild CRY. She PUSHES up, knocking the Monster off her, and springs to her feet.

VI

So it's like a horse-dog?

LON

I'm working on it!

Another JOLT from Mike distracts the Monster away from Vi. Like a bull, now, it scuffs its hoof into the dirt before charging, horn lowered, at Mike. Mike turns tail and runs, but the monster, unlike a bull, adjusts course to pursue.

LON (CONT'D)

Mike!

He runs into frame, TACKLING Mike out of the way, and the Monster is unable to turn around. When it does spin about, it's looking right down the barrel of Frank's SAWED-OFF. Instinctively the Monster realizes it better pack its things, and it flees into the park. Frank FIRES once and misses wide. Frank, Corrine, and Vi give chase.

Tamsin starts to follow, but first she looks over her shoulder and sees Lon helping Mike up.

LON (CONT'D)

(quietly; overly
concerned)

Are you okay?

MIKE

Yeah, thanks.

She smirks and follows.

Meanwhile, Tyler and Jon are just sort of standing around.

JON

So is this your contribution?

TYLER

I don't like to brag.

JON
You don't ever feel a little...
superfluous?

TYLER
All the friggin' time, dude.

Frank, PANTING, returns to the clearing. Lon rushes to his side.

LON
Did you get it?

FRANK
No. It got away. Jeez, it's fast.

MIKE
Well, you know, it is basically a horse.

FRANK
How much lip did I ask for? 'Cause I think it was less than that.

JON
So what do you guys typically do in this situation?

Frank begins reloading his gun.

FRANK
Well, Jon, usually, we put on our walking shoes...

He SNAPS the gun closed with the standard HEROIC CLICK.

FRANK (CONT'D)
And go kill the mother.

CUT TO:

EXT. HEAVEN'S GATE CITY STREET - LATER

Lon and Frank are walking together, searching for the demon.

FRANK
Hey, did you ever figure out what this thing is?

LON
(shaking his head)
Not yet. I've got it narrowed down to a member of the Drackodemia family, but the exact species...
(MORE)

LON (CONT'D)

I think that you should be able to
kill it through your usual method.

FRANK

Complete annihilation?

LON

That's the one.

FRANK

(smirking)

Damn, I'm good at my job.

They march on in silence. Lon glances away, drifting away
into thought.

FADE TO:

INT. TRAVERS HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Quentin Travers sits, reading a book.

TITLE OVER: 1998

A KNOCK on the door causes Quentin to look up. LON, now in
his early 20's, stands proudly in the doorway.

QUENTIN

What? Oh, Lon. Come in, then.

Lon enters the room, an envelope in his hand.

LON

Good afternoon, father.

QUENTIN

Afternoon.

LON

I have something I think you'd like
to see.

Quentin puts the book down and adjusts his glasses.

QUENTIN

Let's have it, then.

Lon hands the envelope to Quentin, who takes it and slits it
open with a trained finger. Unfolding the paper within,
Quentin begins to read, slowly and methodically. Lon,
anxious, can't seem to wait. He fidgets a little, even as an
adult.

Quentin finishes reading and folds up the letter, putting it back in the envelope and setting it aside.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)
Top of your class, I see.

Lon grins proudly.

LON
Yes, sir.

QUENTIN
(matter-of-factly)
Congratulations.

Some of Lon's pomp leaks out.

LON
Congratulations?

QUENTIN
Yes.

LON
That's... I'm sorry, but that's all?

QUENTIN
All what, boy?

LON
All you're going to say.

QUENTIN
(scoffs)
Well, what did you expect?

Lon takes a step backwards.

LON
I don't know, but... more than that! I worked hard, harder than I've ever worked, I have the highest grades of anyone ever at the Watcher's Academy... I even beat you!

Quentin rises. He's a tad offended that his son would dare throw that in his face, but he can't protest because, after all, Lon's right.

QUENTIN
I'm sorry, I'm all out of little treats to feed the puppy!

LON
I did what you asked! I did more
than you asked!

QUENTIN
Oh, yes, your grades are wonderful,
boy. I don't deny that. But that's
not all it takes to be a good
Watcher, Lon.

LON
Then what--

QUENTIN
It takes passion! Commitment!
Dedication. You lack these things,
Lon. Your heart isn't in it. And
that's why you'll never be a good
Watcher.

Quentin sits back down and picks up his book. Lon opens his
mouth to say something, but stops, too angry, and storms out
of the room, SLAMMING the door to the study behind him.

FADE TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Frank and Lon, lost in thought, are still together. Frank is
talking.

FRANK
...wondering about that.

He realizes Lon isn't listening.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Lon? Lon!

He waves his hand in Lon's face. Lon snaps out of his trance.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Hey, buddy, you okay?

LON
Sorry, yes, Quite fine. I was
just... thinking about this thing.
If I'd ever seen it before.

FRANK
Don't worry. We'll find it, I'll
just pop it a few times. No sweat.

Lon chuckles and begins to speak, but an ORANGE BLUR dives into frame and tackles him. Frank cocks and aims his shotgun at the Monster, which HOWLS and prepares to stamp Lon's face.

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. HEAVEN'S GATE CITY STREET - NIGHT

As before. The Monster is about to finish off Lon, but another BLUR swoops in, rescuing Lon. It's Corrine, and she's trying to wrestle the monster to the ground.

FRANK

(annoyed)

If you're that close I can't shoot it.

(beat)

Well. I could.

Corrine struggles to shake the Monster loose, but it manages to stab her leg with its horn before she can leap away.

CORRINE

Dammit!

Jon, who entered with her, grabs her under the arms and pulls her back, away from the Monster. The Monster and Frank engage in a staredown.

Lon cautiously gets to his feet.

LON

You could, uh, shoot it, now. Frank.

FRANK

That's no fun. It's not even running.

The sound of RUNNING FOOTSTEPS causes everyone to turn. Mike, Tyler, Tamsin, and Vi have found the others.

MIKE

Guys! Did you find it?

Then a HOWL! The Monster capitalizes on this distraction, diving towards Frank. But Frank manages to turn, just in time, and FIRES his gun once. The round severely wounds the monster, but it keeps charging Frank, leaping into the air on its good legs. Frank FIRES again, but misses, and the Monster's hooves impact Frank full on the chest. A sick CRUNCH and Frank goes down.

The Monster rolls off Frank and looks for his next target. It settles on Vi, and charges, less forcefully because of its shotgun injuries.

It quickly learns that was a mistake, because when it jumps, Vi ducks under and grabs it by the neck and the body. She TOSSES it into a nearby building, and it crumples in a whimpering heap on the ground.

VI

Someone wanna take care of this?

TAMSIN

It looks so sad, though.

Frank, nursing a probably-broken set of ribs, raises a hand from the ground.

FRANK

No, no ma'am. Not sad. Pretty damn devastating.

Mike steps up.

MIKE

I got this one.

He raises his hands and FIRES a DARK WAVE OF ENERGY at the Monster, and it SLOWLY DISINTEGRATES, WHINING all the while.

When it's finally gone, Tamsin and Vi help Frank up. Jon is supporting Corrine, who is still nursing her injured leg. Jon looks around at the team.

JON

So... this is what you guys do?

Corrine gives Jon a sheepish look as we:

CUT TO:

INT. COMMAND CENTRAL - LATER

Lon and Tamsin are alone in the base. Lon is sitting down, shirtless, and Tamsin is tenderly dressing some cuts he suffered in the battle.

TAMSIN

Doesn't hurt, does it?

LON

(shaking his head)
I've had worse.

Tamsin finishes and hands Lon his shirt. He slowly slides it on. Tamsin sits beside her brother.

TAMSIN
So, how are you?

Lon realizes that his sister isn't talking about his wounds.

LON
(hesitantly)
I'm... well.

Tamsin decides to press further.

TAMSIN
It's just... I get the feeling that something heavy is weighing on your mind.

LON
(nodding)
This whole MacroWare dilemma has really--

Tamsin shakes her head.

TAMSIN
No. It's not that. Something personal.

Lon smiles softly, remembering that he can't hide things from Tamsin. CU on Lon as he looks away.

LON
I've been thinking a lot about father.
(beat)
My whole life I've denied myself of the things I loved to please him. And for what? A curt smile? The occasional pat on the back? I was never good enough for him, no matter what I accomplished. In his eyes I would never be more than a big--

TAMSIN
Fag?

A look of horror crosses Lon's face.

LON
(offended)
I was going to say "failure"--

He turns toward his sister to see that Tamsin, cigarette in mouth, is holding out a box cigs offering him one. A half-smile crosses his face as he understands her use of the word.

LON (CONT'D)
 (shaking his head)
 No thank you.
 (beat; firmly)
 I thought you quit.

Tamsin lights up her cigarette and takes a quick drag.

TAMSIN
 (defensively)
 I have!
 (beat)
 Mostly. It's only occasionally I
 like to--

Lon eyes her reproachfully. Tamsin sighs, takes another puff, and drops the cigarette on the floor, stomping it out.

TAMSIN (CONT'D)
 There. I've quite for good.

She slide her arm around her brother.

TAMSIN (CONT'D)
 And you should too.

LON
 But I don't--

Tamsin cuts him off.

TAMSIN
 Quit beating yourself up over
 father. He was a bastard. But he's
 dead and you're not. So get on with
 your life. You deserve to be happy.

Lon drops his head down and he takes in Tamsin's words.

TAMSIN (CONT'D)
 And if shagging Mike blind makes
 you happy, then I say go for it!

Lon looks to his sister in stunned disbelief. She gives him a sly smile.

LON
 How long have you known?

Tamsin pulls back and LAUGHS.

TAMINS

Serious? I knew you two would get together from day one.

Lon rolls his eyes.

TAMSIN

The whole "we hate each other, but secretly love each other" thing. I mean, anyone could see it coming. Don't you watch the telly at all?

Realizing that his sister is now just teasing him, Lon gingerly stands.

LON

This pointing out of how trite my love-life is is very nice and all, but I do have work to do.

He turns to leave, but a chuckle from Tamsin turns him around.

LON (CONT'D)

What?

TAMSIN

I was just thinking what Father's reaction would be... if you'd have told him this, it would have killed him.

Lon grins, an empty, hollow action.

LON

Perhaps I should have spoken up years ago.

Once again he turns to leave, but Tamsin calls out to him.

TAMSIN

Hey! I love you, you know.

Lon's smile now is genuine, warm.

LON

Yes. I know.

He leaves as we:

CUT TO:

INT. LON'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

Lon enters the bedroom and removes his coat, laying it neatly on the bed. He stands still in the room, rubbing his head with his hands.

QUENTIN (V.O.)

It takes passion! Commitment!
Dedication. You lack these things,
Lon. Your heart isn't in it.

The voice fades out as Lon shakes his head. He walks to his CLOSET and digs around at the bottom for a beat, finally pulling out an OLD VIOLIN CASE. He sits down at the chair behind his desk and opens the case. The VIOLIN inside is the same one he had as a child. Gently, he lightly traces it with a finger.

LON

Hello, old friend.

He picks it up, places it under his chin, and takes the bow. After a moment's hesitation, he begins to PLAY, the SAME SONG he played as a child. He is a little rusty, but the music is still beautiful and filled with passion.

Lon's face expresses his pure happiness as we:

CUT TO:

INT. MACROWARE OFFICES - JON BATES'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Mitch is sitting in Jon's seat, Jon across from him, an obvious shift of power.

JON

It's kind of underground. But there
are computers everywhere... and
this sphere.

Mitch strokes his chin thoughtfully.

MITCH

I can't believe two of their team
members worked here the whole time
and we never suspected it.

JON

Well, Corrine isn't really part of
the team and Tyler... he isn't
really a Secret Ops kind of guy.

MITCH
 Yeah. Good point.
 (beat)
 So what do we do next...

JON
 We?

MITCH
 You and me.

JON
 No! No way! I did what you wanted,
 I spied for you. Now let me... go.
 Free, or whatever it is you do to
 make me my own person.

MITCH
 Pinocchio doesn't get it?
 (leans in)
 You're not gonna turn into a real
 boy, Jon! There's no Blue Fairy!
 You're mine! Accept it.

He stands up, heads to the door. Jon turns in his seat.

JON
 Where are you going?

MITCH
 There are a few more portals I need
 to fine tune before next week. Do
 lock up when you leave.

Jon cradles his head in his hands as Mitch CLOSES the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S DINER - DAY

The gang (minus Corrine and Lon) is sitting at the counter, talking. The door opens to the familiar BELL JINGLING. Lon comes in.

FRANK
 Hey Lon-- uh...

He's struck dumb: Lon's wearing jeans! And a T-shirt! Truly, Armageddon is come.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 You look...

TYLER
 (equally shocked)
 Normal!

VI
 (also shocked)
 I don't think I've ever seen you
 wear a t-shirt. You own a t-shirt?

Tamsin smiles sportively at her brother.

LON
 (smiling confidently)
 Well, I do now.

Lon slides into the seat beside Mike.

LON (CONT'D)
 So what were we talking about?

Everyone is still a little too in shock to continue. Mike
 can't decide what to think.

TAMSIN
 Vi heard this band at the
 Roundhouse the other night. She
 swears it's the guys from the Cure
 pretending to be indie.

VI
 It is!

LON
 Well, Mike and I were at there the
 other night, and we heard quite a
 good group. What were they called?
 "Snot Blotters?"

FRANK
 You and Mike?

Mike quickly jumps in to cover.

MIKE
 Oh, yeah, well, we saw each other
 there, I was with this guy named
 Blake, uh, and then---

But Lon stops him by simply grabbing Mike's hand in his own.

LON
 Stop. No more of that.

The rest of the gang looks at the two, confused and slightly suspicious.

LON (CONT'D)

Now, boys and girls, I think Mike
and I have something to tell you...

Off Mike's warm smile we:

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW