

LIMINAL

Pilot

By

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LIMINAL

"Pilot"

EXT. FOREST-NIGHT

A BOY wearing a scout's uniform carries a heavy rock painted pink, dropping it with a dull thud onto a shallow mound of freshly upturned soil. He wipes his sweaty brow with a dirty sleeve.

He quickly turns his head at the menacing sound of a creature. He looks, wide eyed, into the darkness of a tunnel. The darkness seems to look back at him. He grabs a shovel from the ground, holds it like a weapon as he takes a cautious step forward. The menacing growl crescendos to a startling rattle that prompts the boy to stumble backward.

He fumbles in his pockets, pulling out a small flashlight. He trains a weak beam of light onto the tunnel's gaping maw. Two yellow eyes reflect the light, sparkling like gems. The boy's eyes widen as the flashlight flickers and falters. He hits the light against his thigh, but the batteries are dead.

Taking a deep breath, he holds the shovel in both hands and squares his shoulders. The deep rattle of the creature intensifies with each step forward. He disappears into the inky black of the tunnel.

EXT. BEAUTIFUL WILDLIFE- GOLDEN HOUR

A young woman is standing in front of a beautiful wildlife scene. She smiles at the camera.

GALA

Hello. My name is Gala. I wanted to speak to you about the future. Your future. Have you ever imagined being exactly who you've always dreamt to be?

In the past, trivial things such as the location, the class, and the body you were born into could limit your happiness and enable others to pass judgement onto you.

Echo Labs believes that people are more than the bodies they inhabit. We can all ascend into something more... Something better.

In our patented Echo system, you are set free to be who you want, travel where you like, and do what you please. Echo lacks micro-transactions in unity, so everyone is equal. In Echo, we are all equal. In Echo, we are liberated.

Echo Labs: The greatest equilibrium.

INT. MICKEY'S APARTMENT- EARLY MORNING

The sound of the commercial reverberates softly through the apartment. The apartment is cluttered with memorabilia and anachronistic souvenirs; junk packed into colorful crates neatly stacked against every wall.

A young woman is at her desk with her head down on her arms. Behind her, the television is playing. She is taking in deep and even breaths. An alarm SCREAMS suddenly, ripping her out of her slumber. She startles awake and grabs her phone. She gets up and stretches out. As she walks past the television, she turns it off abruptly as another Echo commercial starts.

When opening the bathroom door, a bottle of pills falls onto her head. She jumps a little before bending down to pick up the bottle.

MICKEY

Every time...

She enters the bathroom. When she leaves it, looking much more refreshed, she returns the pills to the doorway.

She goes to the kitchen. She grabs two microwave burritos. The microwave door clicks open, but only after Mickey has pressed the button hard and wiggles the door a little. In goes two frozen burritos. She SLAMS the microwave door shut. As the microwave buzzes to life, she starts on a single serve cup of

coffee. The coffee gurgles as it falls into a pink lucky cat porcelain travel cup. She grabs her cup and the two burritos out of the microwave before leaving.

INT. HALLWAY

Mickey notices a package at her neighbor's door. She knocks on her door, but the neighbor is inside plugged into VR.

EXT. SIDEWALK- MORNING

A HOMELESS MAN rolls up a red sleeping bag. He shoves the roll into an overstuffed backpack. He pulls out a folded bit of cardboard, unfolds it to reveal a sign made with sharpie. The penmanship is child-like, but boldly legible if not spelled correctly: "NEED JOB. NEED FOOD." He pulls out a series of signs: "GOD BLESS" "HUNGRY" "VETERAN" "FAMILY ABDUCTED BY ALIENS"...

He pulls the cap off a fat sharpie marker with his teeth. He writes for a few seconds, marker squeaking on the cardboard. He sits on the sidewalk, the sign he's holding reads: "The end is nigh. REPENT." (Or it's a picture?)

Mickey walks up to the man. She jumps and almost drops her burrito as her phone goes off. She looks at her phone. On the screen flashed the name GALA.

She sighs as she slips her phone back into her pocket.

HOMELESS MAN

(In American Sign Language)

Easily spooked, Bluebird?

Mickey looks down at the homeless man as he stares at her from his position on the sidewalk. She tries to sign with her hands full, but just about drops a burrito. She sighs and hands Bernard the burrito before setting down the cup.

MICKEY

Good morning, BERNARD. That one seems a little dark.

She picks up her cup then salutes him as she goes. He laughs and takes a bite, saluting her back as she leaves.

EXT. RIVER EARLY MORNING

Mickey crosses bridges and walks along riverbanks covered in litter as she ungraciously devours her burrito, wiping beans from her chin with the sleeve of her army green jacket. She investigates random junk, putting a few interesting pieces into her ever present orange backpack.

She feeds the last bite of her burrito to a stray animal (dog, cat, or duck).

The homeless people, dressed in layers, placards, and masks occasionally dot the urban landscape, but the city is otherwise empty. No cars.

EXT. RIVER- DAY

The boy walks along the same river, taking pictures with a 35mm Pentax. He collects little treasures like flowers and smooth rocks. There is no litter and no homeless people in the boy's world.

He crosses a long footbridge.

EXT. LIMINAL LABS-MORNING

Mickey crosses a long footbridge, looking at the post modern architecture of the massive LIMINAL Lab complex. Establishing the lab building (Pablo?). She walks across the courtyard up to the front door.

INT. LIMINAL LABS- MORNING

Very wide shots of Mickey through an exterior window.

Mickey fumbles with her **key card**, trying to put it back into her wallet.

Empty, wide shots of hallways, cameras, a screen playing promo, elevator.

An immaculately dressed YOUNG WOMAN delivers a monologue. She is depicted on screens throughout the lab. All versions of her are standing in the same parlake scene, saying the same thing (theme) which echoes throughout the empty complex.

YOUNG WOMAN

(In British Accent)

Welcome *home* to Liminal Labs. Welcome home to the future. Welcome home to eternity. Our patented Liminal Bridge technology has opened a new world of memory. Experience your sanctuary. Be

one with yourself. Be one with others.
Be a part of the enlightenment.

The image of the young woman dissolves into 60fps (slow) cheesy footage of an old couple talking and laughing. Hack music. A ray of sunlight peeks through puffy clouds. A child prays. The pink logo transitions to center screen.

Mickey walks down a hallway, her *fingers gliding against the walls*. Two elevators open quickly when she presses the button. One elevator is playing the cringy promo video while the other is quiet. She at first enters the first elevator before realizing her mistake and quickly backs out. She steps onto the quiet car, hitting a button to the soft chime of confirmation. Mickey calmly sips the last of her coffee. **Suddenly** a voice fills the elevator through a speaker. Gala's face fills the entire back wall of the elevator car. Mickey jumps, startled, nearly drops her mug. Mickey doesn't turn to look at the young woman.

YOUNG WOMAN

I've been told by multiple sources that it's rude to ignore someone's call. You spirited me.

MICKEY

Jesus fucking Christ, Gala.

Mickey whispers to herself and then addresses Gala.

MICKEY

I spirited you?

GALA

Yes.

Mickey stares blankly into the middle distance, dumbfounded for a long moment before a connection is made in her head. She slowly turns to look at Gala.

MICKEY

You mean, I GHOSTED you?

GALA

Are they not synonymous?

MICKEY

Yes and no, and yes and no. In this context, it would be ghosting. Spirited sounds like you're ready for a pep rally.

Mickey flashes her badge to a sensor to get off on her floor. Mickey waves her arms around like a cheerleader in a condescending way.

GALA

Pep rally?

Mickey finally gives Gala her full attention, as they walk toward their "office".

MICKEY

Yeah, the thing we watched a few weeks ago. With the cheerleaders and the

football players all in costume.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD-DAY

At 60fps, a cheerleader shouts and kicks her feet (see: Nirvana's Teen Spirit video).

CHEERLEADER

Ready? OK!

GALA

I see.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD- DAY

The boy stands alone on an empty football field. He lays down. He points his camera up at the clouds. He depresses the plunger with a click. He winds the film, more clicking.

He stands before another subject to snap another photo. Then another and another.

EXT. FOREST-DAY

The boy takes one last picture of a waterfall. He sits on a log and winds up his film, removing the roll from the back of the camera.

GALA (VO)

What's he doing?

MICKEY (VO)

He's taking photos.

The boy is now looking around and picking up different items from the ground. He is carrying a toolbox in his left hand as he rummages for items.

MICKEY (VO)

Annnnnnd... Now he is collecting stuff.

GALA (VO)

But it's all nonsensical. What is the significance of his collection? Why is he making such sporadic decisions?

MICKEY (VO)

I think it's just stuff he likes.

GALA (VO)

Yes, but why? What's he going to do with this...this...stuff?

The projection get's glitchy. The video speeds up and cuts to other staticy footage. The viewer can see him grabbing a shovel in flashes. Then burying the toolbox in the ground. Then marking the spot. All of this is interrupted by weird visions/imagery.

MICKEY (VO)

What's up with that, GALA? Can you clean it up a bit?

INT. SCREENING ROOM-DARK

Projected on the entirety of the wall is a forest with the BOY. Mickey stands before the wall, casting shadows onto the projection of the forest.

GALA

It would appear that some of the data from 567 was corrupted in the Bridge. It caused a cascading error when processing it's data...

Mickey cuts in.

MICKEY

His information, his memories.

Gala stops then continues.

GALA

The error in it's...his memory is probably due to a poor install. He's an older unit, so when he was prepared, the Bridge wasn't as seamless as one would hope. The memories are distorted. They're getting distorted by some...fictional data.

MICKEY

(Whispers)

Dreams. I think those are his dreams. His dreams are clouding the Bridge link.

GALA

How whimsical. I've always wondered what dreams were like. What it would be like to experience them.

MICKEY

Sometimes they are magical...Like being able to fly and go where you want... To be limitless... and other times you're plummeting down to your death....Can you clean up the memories we recovered before we lost him? I want to see what's in that box of his.

GALA

Apologies, but that sequence is gone. I can attempt to interpolate, but it's a wetware issue.

MICKEY

Of course it is. How much data did you save in the buffer? Can you show me right up to the point he buries the box? I have to know.

GALA

I hope that you aren't planning to look for it tonight, Mickey.

Mickey swipes the post-its and grabs her pen out of her pocket, ignoring GALA. She paces the room as a boy moves into the screen. The video is of his full memories, uninterrupted from dreams. She can only see from his waist up. He passes a stream. Mickey takes note and sticks a post-it over the image of the mouth of the stream on the wall. Mickey notes and sticks post-its for every unique and odd thing she sees. As the boy moves deeper into the frame, it's seen that he is holding a red

metal toolbox.

MICKEY

Jackpot.

GALA

Jack? Is there someone else there as well?

MICKEY

Shhhh, less talky, more projecty. I want to see where this goes.

GALA

Your interest in this box is concerning, Mickey. Please confirm that you have no intentions on finding it.

The footage resumes with the boy as he moves deeper and deeper into the forest. At each landmark, Mickey leaves a post-it, the boy carves an arrow in a tree. He moves through a dark tunnel. They watch as the box is buried into the ground by the boy and he places heavy pink rock onto the site. He stands and looks at the hole. Mickey moves into the light again and stands beside him. He's proportionate to her.

MICKEY

GALA, pause please.

Mickey steps into the stream of light casting shadows onto the wall, interrupting the imagery, but also becoming a part of it herself. She bends down and looks at the box. She writes on a

post-it, sticks it to the wall over the projection of the toolbox. She turns to Gala.

MICKEY

Show me more on this, please.

The boy, Scout, has his red toolbox sitting in front of him. He stares at the box for a long moment then moves forward quickly and looks through it again. He's positioned in such a way that Mickey can't see what he is looking at inside. Mickey turns to Gala again.

MICKEY

Gala, can you show me a diffe-

Mickey falters as she sees an error message on Gala's screen. Mickey grabs her phone to message Gala on her app, but an error message greets her there too. Mickey walks over to the monitor and tries to fix the problem. She looks visibly panicked.

MICKEY

(Louder)

Gala...?

She calls out louder and louder as she begins to pace the room. Her fingers are clenching and loosening manically. She slowly looks over at Gala's monitor.

MICKEY

Damn it. I'm supposed to be the one that crashes.

She whispers it to herself. She writes down the error message before leaving the room.

She looks through a ridiculously thick book looking for the Gala UNIT error code. She freezes when she reads a passage about how to fix the "Wetware" issue. She takes out her phone and makes a call.

MICKEY

Hi, I'm trying to reach tech support.... My employee number is 11951, I work at Lab facility 28...I'm calling about my Gala Unit.

Mickey is pacing back and forth in the room, clicking her pen over and over as she waits on hold.

MICKEY

Hi, yeah, I'm calling about my Gala unit. She crashed and I was wondering what happens next for rebooting her...Yes, of course...I mean it. Apologies...Anyways, the error message is 5.28.567

Mickey listens to the operator for a long time and she slows her pacing until she entirely stops. Dread slows her features, like gears trying to turn in sand. She comes to a stop.

MICKEY

Yes... Yes, I read the manual.... I

know it says that I need to manually
restart it but I was hoping that there
was someone that could aid in the proc-
....Yes... Yes I'm aware that it's part
of my job description.... Yes... Yes, I
see... I don't see why you need to use
that tone...Sorry...I didn't mean to
mouth off ...It won't happen
again...I'm sorry...Okay... Yes... I
understand. Thank you...

Mickey sets her phone down, then takes in a deep breath to calm herself. She covers her face with her hands. As she breathes out, she looks at her phones and fips it off with both hands. She's alone in the cavernous Screening Room. Her mind goes to her medication as it lingers over the door to her bathroom. The weird static of the projection pulses.

(Mickey has an epileptic seizure.)

EXT. ALLEY-DAY

Bernard writes with charcoal on a wall. An electric car stops at the mouth of the alley. A DARK FIGURE, the driver, looks at Bernard. Bernard notices the spectator from a distance.

BERNARD

(In Sign)

It's art! No one cares.

The Figure steps out of his car, a silhouette backlit by the

sun.

BERNARD

(Angry Sign)

Who are you? Mind your own business!

Bernard puffs out his chest and walks toward the Figure. The Figure reaches into the car and pulls out a menacing-looking ax. He calmly walks toward Bernard. Bernard hastily grabs his overstuffed backpack and runs in the opposite direction. But he must scale a fence as the Figure steadily approaches.

Angle on the writing on the wall: "I'm still here." The Dark Figure walks passed the writing, his creepy mask is clearly visible.

INT. SCREENING ROOM-DARK

Mickey wakes to the sound of an automated reminder that she is entitled to a lunch break. She lies on the Screening Room floor in tears as the gentle voice repeats.

AUTOMATED REMINDER

Congratulations. You have worked so hard. It is now time to rest, recharge, and sustain yourself with a healthy and delicious meal.

Mickey slowly digs through her pockets to a tiny notebook. She opens it and places her fingers over the part of the page that has the answers written. She looks at the questions then answers

out loud.

Mickey

Name: Mickey Lee Thomas. Age: 25.

As she continues onward, she moves her finger down to reveal the written answers. All of her spoken answers align with the written. She seems to relax more and more as she gets them right.

INT. LUNCHROOM-DAY

Mickey stands in front of a vending machine, looking at selections that are not healthy or delicious. She makes a selection mindlessly, as she grabs out her phone from her pocket. Through her earbuds, she listens to a voicemail.

Older Woman

I hope you have a good day, Darling.

No matter what, I believe in you.

She finishes her sandwich, throwing the paper wrapping away in the trash. She then leaves the room, walking with a determined stride.

INT. LIMINAL LABS-DAY

She walks down the hallway once again. She reaches the elevator and the door dings open right away. She boards and she presses the bottom button.

MICKEY

(To herself)

Get a job without co-workers. You won't have to deal with people. No gossip. No water cooler talk... No talk... No co-workers... No one...

Mickey breathes out a shaky breath as the elevator dings and she is at the bottom floor. The doors strain open and she slowly moves out onto the floor. It feels like she has to walk forever through the labyrinth of corridors. As she walks, the determination leaves her body and she feels small.

She gets a little lost and has to turn around after hitting a dead end. She leaves postits with arrows stuck to walls like breadcrumbs. She throws up her hands in exasperation. The only sound is her breathing and her footsteps.

Finally, she arrives:

INT.THE VAULT ANTECHAMBER

Above the frosty door, a postit read: "The Ice Box".

MICKEY

(Looking at the door)

Fuck.

Mickey fishes out her access card to the sensor. There is a DING as she is granted access then a CLICKING as the door unlocks. She pushes the door open and enters.

INT. BOY'S ROOM-DAY

The boy opens the door to his room and steps inside. He puts the red toolbox, a flashlight, and a can of pink spray paint into a backpack. He dons his ball cap and Lone Ranger mask. He looks at himself in a mirror.

INT. VAULT ANTECHAMBER

Mickey looks at herself in a mirror as she puts her protective goggles in place. She's in a room that's lined with equipment and protective gear. She looks to hook holding a simple *hammer*. Above it read a message on a postit: "IN CASE OF ROBOT UPRISING".

INT. SHED-DAY

The boy scans a series of hooks holding tools. He grabs a *shovel*.

He is walking among a row of tall trees with the shovel sticking awkwardly from his backpack.

INT. VAULT

MICKEY walks among rows of tall tanks holding the hammer. She is entirely covered and the only thing seen on her is her face through a clear plastic shield. In her gloved hand is the post-it with the error message. She approaches a tank near her and looks for the tag.

She finds the metal plate and brushes the frost off of it. It

reads 783. She looks at another a few rows over. 928. She begins to go the opposite way of 928. She looks at the post-it and inspects tags. Finally, she arrives at plate 567. The same number that's on the error message.

She looks up at the pillar then steps close to it. It's tall, but around the width of a locker. She looks for the door. It's frozen shut, but she is able to force it open with the hammer. She flinches and looks down, away from the tank.

MICKEY

Sorry, 567. I need to check your wiring.

Her voice is a trembling whisper as she looks back toward the tank which holds a disembodied brain, wires protruding from its gooey mass. She begins to gingerly inspect the wires. She finds a cable that is loose. She has to slowly pull it out. The wire keeps coming and coming as she pulls.

The coating on the wire that comes out is more and more discolored. Dripping with goo. She finally finds the broken connector piece. She swaps the piece out with another from a satchel and slowly feeds the wire back in.

She pulls a small screen from her satchel and connects a lead to it, pressing a few commands. An image appears on the screen of the boy at a much younger age running through a cornfield.

She taps the screen a few more times. An image appears of the older boy with the Lone Ranger mask crossing a rickety footbridge. She taps again. We see only her expression as the

scene plays out on her small screen.

The brain begins to twitch, drawing Mickey's attention. Parts of the tank began to emit smoke as a red warning light flashes.

The image on Mickey's small screen flickers to bizarre images like a road, painting of The Raft of the Medusa, the lunar surface, and a bridge with lights that slowly change colors.

The brain seems to crack open, spilling a cloud of inky fluid into the tank.

INT. ECHO LABS BATHROOM

Mickey is inside of a stall as she vomits, there are sobs interlaced with the sound of her throwing up. After a few moments, the noise stops. She leaves the stall and goes to the sink and washes up. For a moment her reflection looks frozen over and dead. She flinches and pulls away.

INT. SCREENING ROOM

Mickey is at her small screen beside Gala's monitor as she restarts the system. It slowly boots to life and Gala flashes onto the wall screen. Her face enormously close up.

GALA

Welcome to your GALA experience. Please think of a command to get started.

MICKEY

Voice only.

GALA

You can access more features if linked
with a Liminal Bridge...

MICKEY

Incompatible. Epileptic.

GALA

OK. Outlier override. Please say a
command.

MICKEY

Access last back-up OF GALA unit in
facility 28 and integrate.

GALA

One moment please...Mickey, why are the
lights on? Were we not just bridging
the memories?...I don't- Are you okay?

Mickey is looking worse for wear, the small amount of makeup she
wears is smeared and her shirt has water collected around the
collar from where she splashed her face. Mickey LAUGHS weakly
then nods.

MICKEY

Yeah, I'm okay. Are you? You had a near
fatal crash. Can you run a quick
diagnostic?

Gala seems perplexed but begins the scan.

Mickey seemed on edge, clicking her pen frequently, but she keeps her thoughts to herself.

GALA

Unit 567 is permanently off-line. There was a fatal crash in it's operating system. As a result, there will need to be a clean up of the unit. The space will be rendered empty until a replacement can be located.

Mickey grows more and more distant as she pictures the boy and the loss of him, of his memories. Gala's words seem to fall away and Mickey looks onward distressed.

INT. LIMINAL LABS-NIGHT

MICKEY

Gala, I'll send the report on Unit 567 tomorrow. I wasn't able to fully interopelate his intentions and emotions post viewing due to the error in the Bridge.

GALA

This seems reasonable. I assume that you also need time to...decompress after that experience in the Vault.

MICKEY

What do you mean?

GALA

I scanned the archived footage from the surveillance cameras from today.

Flash to security footage. Mickey cuts Gala off.

MICKEY

Gotcha. Okay. You don't need to worry about me, I'm not the one that was lost today...

GALA

But we have an open tank. A new subject can join us. New memories and opportunities. You did everything you could for Unit 567. Now you get to help someone new.

MICKEY

Yeah... Don't get me wrong...I'm excited to have someone new here, but... but I need to know what happened to him first.

She says as she gathers her stack of used post-its that are all stuck together in mismatched ways. She leaves the building and starts walking through the city at night.

EXT. CITY-NIGHT

Bernard looks through trash bins. He picks up a cigarette butt from the street and lights it, coughing profusely. He notices

the electric car moving toward him from down the street. He turns and starts walking briskly in the opposite direction.

GALA (VO)

I disapprove of your actions, Mickey.
Please reconsider. There could be
unforeseen consequences. There are
predators out there.

MICKEY (VO)

Predators? Really?

GALA (VO)

There *are* people out here. Only the
most desperate of people live outside
of VR. They prey upon people like you.
Death is a very real consequence. Or
worse.

MICKEY (VO)

Worse than dead?

GALA (VO)

I don't understand why you feel it's
necessary to do this. You need to be
avoiding stress after your episode
toda-

Mickey hangs up the call at this point.

EXT. FOREST- NIGHT

MICKEY

Oooo no, Gala I'm sooooo sorry. The call just cut out last night. I have no idea what happened. Just a shame...

Mickey says as she ventures into the woods. A path leads into the darkness of a cavelike mass of vegetation.

MICKEY

My mom always told me that I needed to act more human. What's more human than risking life and limb for a hopeless quest? Let's just hope there aren't any NPCs...

She steps in the woods, swallowed up by the darkness, using her phone as a flashlight.

She looks around her and then down at the post-its. TRIPLE FORKED OAK. She looks up to see an oak tree with three big trunks coming out of the same base. She reaches up her hand to feel the arrow carved into the bark.

FLASH TO: Boy carves arrow.

4 LINES OF BARBED WIRE. She steps over the broken and rusted wires on the ground.

EXT. CITY-NIGHT

Bernard shambles onto a footbridge, looking over his shoulder as a dark figure follows him. Bernard's pace quickens, but the dark figure is patiently, slowly walking toward him.

Bernard looks to the other side of the bridge where a second dark figure stands. Bernard continues walking until he sees that the second figure holds a machete.

Bernard stops in the middle of the bridge, looking side to side at both figures slowly striding toward him. He looks down at the river.

He jumps off the bridge into the river far below.

EXT. FOREST-DAY

The Boy approaches a tunnel.

EXT. FOREST-NIGHT

Mickey trepidaciously enters the tunnel. On the other side of the scary tunnel Mickey recognizes the scene from Scout's memory. But there are changes: litter is scattered on the ground and graffiiti mars the rocks and mossy ruins. Mickey seems thrilled by the adventure, loving how the story is playing out before her.

She stops in front of a Pink rock. She then begins to look around before she finds a shovel, rusted and grown over with vegetation. She digs. There is a loud TING as she strikes metal. She finally pulls up a metal box.

INT. BOY'S ROOM-DAY

SCOUT sits on the floor of his bedroom. Obsessively organized toys of all shapes and sizes radiate in perfect rows from him. He is a

nucleus, the heart of dandelion, or a spider sitting in the middle of a web.

EXT. RIVER-NIGHT

Bernard lays dead and headless on the litter strewn bank of the river. A man walks away from Bernard's corpse holding a bag.