The IMPETUS:

The man versus machine dichotomy has been a staple of pop culture for decades. From 2001: A Space Odyssey to Blade Runner to Terminator to The Matrix and beyond, film makers have envisioned what the world would look like if artificial intelligence took over. However, a new mindset is taking shape — the era of AI-human hybrid intelligence. This combination of a human brain and a computer intelligence is known as a *centaur*. The centaur model sparked the growth of freestyle chess, a context in which Garry Kasparov concluded that "weak human + machine + better process was superior to a strong computer alone and, more remarkable, superior to a strong human + machine + inferior process." Kasparov's statement regarding the centaur model is no longer relegated to the world of chess. As AI innovation continues to grow, we should carefully review the centaur model in terms of the workplace and consider how combined human and computer intelligence will redefine jobs. (Brad Bush)

The SET-UP:

Mickey's post-object world was a night time world. She lives in a seemingly empty city where trash litters the streets, the homeless huddled together in every alley. Everyone around her was checked out or plugged in. Those who could interface lived digital lives, their food delivered by drone, their lives a self-imposed quarantine. IRL was for the godlike wealthy or the destitute poor. Mickey survived, paycheck-to-paycheck as a translator of dreams.

In another time, she would have made a decent living as a programmer or game designer but such professions were now the providence of AI living on impossibly powerful post-boolean quantum processors. She walked through the city each night to put in her ten hours at Startime Cryogenics, a warehouse for frozen humans called corpsicles. For a generation, people believed that if they could halt the decay of their bodies, that they may be revived in the future using advanced technological processes. Mickey often wonders how her ancestors could be so foolish. Freezing expands water, bursting the cells of any organism.

The AI of Starlight were eminently capable of running simulation algorithms that could model the neural pathways of the corpsicles, but they could not fathom the memories uncovered. Mickey's role at Startime was to monitor the data gathered from the frozen brains of the corpsicles and report findings to the governing board who exist in digital space. She experiences vignettes, slivers of the lives of individuals who lived in the past.

CHARACTERS:
Mickey Sandoval, Young Adult, Introvert Photographer, Anti-Hero, Chosen One
The AI Co-Worker, Sidekick, Storyteller, Narrator, Max Headroom
The Homeless, Older Generation, Dan Johnston + Gandolf
The Digital Bosses, Live in Screens, Post-Human

Pilot:

Mickey starts a new job.

Style:
Cyberpunk +1984
Flashbacks/Noir
ANALEPSIS AND PROLEPSIS

Premise:
Inspired by vintage Sci-Fi, Liminal recounts the personal histories of those people who have been cryogenically frozen, stored at ECHO Lab where a lonely employee works with a glitchy AI to digitize memories.

Synopsis:
Liminal features recurring themes and overlapping plots but each episode will function as a standalone short story. *The Twilight Zone* meets Duncan Jones's *Moon* with a dash of *Mystery Science Theater*.

So I'd planned on making a more traditional sitcom with a regular, recurring cast of characters. But the need for social distancing has made such an endeavour more than a little impractical. But, I'm not going to let a small thing like a global viral epidemic stop me from realizing my goal of making a show. This 'new normal' will dictate, somewhat, the parameters of this show. I firmly believe that creativity flourishes within constraints.

Here are the goals:
1. Write 6-10 Episode Scripts
2. Write a Show Bible/Pitch Document (Stranger Things Example)
3. Write a Loose Framework For 3-5 Seasons
4. Logline/Elevator Pitch
5. Film the Pilot

Key questions:

• Is this concept truly original?

• Will this idea stand out from the pack?

• What makes this show's world unique?

• What am I showing viewers they've never seen before?

This premise is based on a novel called "Heads" written by Greg Bear. In that story, a corporation acquires a few dozen frozen heads called corpsicles. A scientist works to glimpse the memories stored within these heads to get a unique view of history from the first hand perspective of those who experienced it.

In my adaptation,
A worker screens the memories of frozen heads in a very isolated future where most humans have 'logged in' to digital space. Her bosses are screens, her coworker is an AI, her city is nearly empty of people. Her experience represents the throughline for the series, the 'A' story. We follow her life from her interview at the cryogenics lab to her realization of the grisly details of the job.

Mickey's city is inspired by my experience living in Cleveland, Ohio which was once a bustling metropolis. When I lived there, my neighborhood was decidedly underpopulated. Every other house was empty. Streets were in need of repair, grass and weeds encroached sidewalks, litter was strewn everywhere. There was even a problem with packs of stray dogs roaming unchecked throughout the city, killing pets and threatening citizens. Mickey's city is also empty which adds to her loneliness.

Mickey works at night, the "C" shift. Her world is a night time world lit by neon and sodium street lights. She commutes to work on foot, crossing bridges over a black river dammed by a steaming power plant, passing huddled homeless people sleeping in alleys. Curious and observant, she often stops to collect an interesting piece of litter or take a slow exposure with her vintage 35 mm camera. The last few blocks are often covered in a frantic run as she realizes she might be late for her shift.

She is acutely patronized by her bosses at the cryogenic lab. They belittle her via screens, avatars for a managerial class who will not deign to co-mingle with low level workers. Her so-called superiors like so many others live and work in a digital space that has abandoned the real world (IRL). Mickey's function within such a company is to

interface with the organic, frozen brains. Her uniquely human empathy qualifies her to make sense of the data being captured from the heads.

She develops a somewhat contentious relationship with her only co-worker, a robotic intelligence that (mis)communicates with Mickey via a series of screens and speakers. The duo mimic a sort of Abbott and Costello routine full of misunderstandings, exasperated complaints and glitchy exposition. They work together to unlock the memories of the heads that they 'watch' like movies, vignettes from the past.

This sets up the basic framework of the series. We write/film episodic shorts, pieces of memory extracted from the frozen minds of corpses. These stories can be woven together into a larger plot that spans seasons, but they could also be self-contained. These narratives don't have to be scifi nor do they have to be confined to any specific genre. They could take place at any time in the present or the past (going back a century or so) or even the not-too-distant future as Mickey's story takes place in a post-singularity timeline. The only rule is that each story includes very little cast interaction or includes a cast that comingles in quarantine (like a family). Overall, loneliness and alienation sort emerges as a theme. But I also want to lean into comedy when we can. Can soul crushing ennui be funny?

Some inspiration from Kurt Vonnegut who said:

> The arts are not a way to make a living. They are a very human way of making life more bearable. Practicing an art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow, for heaven's sake. Sing in the shower. Dance to the radio. Tell stories. Write a poem to a friend, even a lousy poem. Do it as well as you possibly can. You will get an enormous reward. You will have created something.

DELIVERABLES/PITCH DOCUMENT:

• Title. Create an interesting title that touches on the main theme of the story, or the

dramatic tension faced by your character.

• Logline. A punchy yet impactful summation of the story concept. No more than two sentences, ideally one. A logline for a narrative series will usually delve into the particular circumstances and conflict that drives the plot forward.

• Synopsis. A broad overview of the series, making clear the world it's set in and the dynamics between the characters. This is of particular importance from a commercial perspective to a network, because you're highlighting the most compelling thematic facets of the series. This could be accomplished in a few paragraphs, or a number of pages, so long as the writing itself is polished and reads at a nice clip.

• Characters. Describe your protagonist and other key players in the show. Speak to their backgrounds as well as their current lifestyle in a paragraph or so. Explain the way in which they view the world; how they see themselves and how they relate to other people. Find their flaws, their quirks, and the unique peccadillos that make them tick.

• Pilot outline. A step-by-step breakdown of the pilot episode, running through the machinations of the plot.

• Future episodes. A list of eight to thirteen descriptions of potential future episodes—something akin to a logline for each one.

Series bible elements.
All of these elements put together should broadly address the following:

• How are your primary characters and your characters' world unique?

• What makes the audience care about these characters?

• What are their complexities and their flaws?

• What drives them to make the choices they do?

• Why do you as a writer feel the need to tell this particular story?

• What do you want the audience to take away from it?

• What is the overall tone of the show?

• If possible, compare it to a combination of other, existing programs or movies.

Michael's Pitchbook:

Vintage Sci-FI Inspiration: