

Liminal

written by

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INT. PARKING GARAGE - 9:45PM

A man walks through empty parking spots in a large parking complex. Dim fluorescent lights flash above his head irregularly as he approaches the elevator platform.

This is DAVID, 21. His hair is wet, his denim jacket still has water droplets on it. He has a hoodie underneath the jacket, but the hood is down. There are bags under his eyes that are darker than they should be.

As David rounds the corner to the elevator platform, a woman comes into view, already waiting for the elevator. She scrolls passively on her phone. We hear THE ELEVATOR MECHANISM GRINDING FAINTLY in the background.

David takes a moment to close his eyes and take a deep, shaky breath, then pulls his phone out to wait. There is a message started already.

"There's something I need you all to know, and I don't really know how to say it. "

David stares at the screen. His fingers tremble but they do not hit any keys on the phone before it goes black.

His focus returns to the elevator, the GRINDING OF THE ELEVATOR MECHANISM grows louder. David stares intently. The sound stops.

CUT TO BLACK.

A DINER ENTRANCE BELL.

CUT TO:

INT. A NONDESCRIPT DINER - ???

David sits in a vinyl diner booth. In front of him is a translucent plastic cup of water, and he continues to stare at his phone. There are only a few other diners at other tables and booths. They all look into their plates of various foods. They all dine alone.

On David's table is a second plastic cup of water. There is a light crack running up the side, but no water is spilling out.

David looks at his phone again, leaning hunched over the table. The note we saw earlier is still there, no more text has been added. David begins to type.

"I'm sorry for how this is happening"

He quickly deletes it before adding more text. He sighs, and takes a sip of water.

With an exhale, he drops his head down onto the table. We hear THE DINER ENTRANCE BELL again, FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING, and the sound of VINYL SQUEAKING as someone enters the other seat of the booth.

VOICE (O.S.)
Oh man, you really are having
trouble, aren't you?

David does not answer.

VOICE (O.S.)
I mean, "I'm sorry?" Dave, come
on, we can do better than this.

David lifts his head to look at the person across from him. It is another version of himself. This is COPY, 21. He is clean cut, his hair styled nicely, and he wears a fine pressed white button down with a black silk tie.

COPY
I knew this was going to be hard
for you, but I didn't think I'd
have to come in to help. And HERE
of all places?
(beat)
Alright. Come on, you can't sit
here forever.

Copy sits forward in his seat, and takes the phone from David. He gestures in the air for a waiter while looking at the phone.

COPY
Hm. Okay. This is certainly
a...uh...start.
(beat)
Kind of a cop out though, don't
you think? Starting it with "I
don't know how to start this"? Why
don't you just get right into it?

Copy hands David the phone again. David is sitting up now, leaning forward over the table.

COPY
Here, come on. Let's get a fresh
start.

David deletes the text he's written. He stares at the phone. Copy stares at David. After a long moment, David stares back up at Copy, confused.

DAVID
Are...are you going to help me?
Like, tell me what to write?

COPY

What? No, we agreed this has to come from you. I can't do it for you.

(beat)

But, considering the situation, I can offer some suggestions. How about this: how are you feeling today? They should know why we're here. I mean, not *here* here, but, **here**.

DAVID

...insignificant, I think. Like, if I never made it home today, I don't know who would notice, or when.

COPY

Why don't we just use that? Seems like a good enough way to start. Tell them how you're really feeling.

DAVID

Isn't that a little...aggressive, though? Just going right for it?

COPY

Is that really what you're worried about?

DAVID

(beat)

I mean, I don't want this to sound like I'm angry at them.

COPY

Aren't you?

DAVID

I- Angry isn't the right word. I don't know what I am at them.

COPY

But it's not, *not* angry.

DAVID

I guess. Mostly I just feel empty.

COPY

Then it shouldn't matter how we start it, should it?

DAVID
 (annoyed)
 No. I guess it shouldn't.

David starts typing on his phone.

"I spent today thinking about how long it would take for anyone to notice if I didn't make it home from work today."

Copy looks at David. David sighs and continues writing.

"Maybe tomorrow, maybe next week, maybe even never. Actually, it'll be sooner now that I'm writing this"

Copy stares at David. He crosses his arms, and sighs.

DAVID
 Don't look at me like that. Once they get this, they'll be waiting for me. It ruins the sentiment.

COPY
 You can't keep that in there.

DAVID
 I think it's important.

COPY
 It takes all the punch out. You want this to have no punch?

DAVID
 ...No.

David leans back in his seat, and starts to delete the text. As he does this, a waitress approaches the table. Copy sits up, attentive.

COPY
 Then take it out.

Copy turns his attention to the WAITRESS. He furrows his brow suspiciously for just a moment as he looks at her. We do not see her face. As David returns his attention to Copy, he quickly loses his expression, and begins ordering.

COPY
 Yeah, I'll take a cup of coffee with a touch of sugar, some toast, extra dark please, a plate of bacon, a plate of sausage, and some hash-browns. Extra crispy.

Copy glances at David

COPY

Oh, and a black coffee for him.

David opens his mouth to say something, but copy shoos the waitress away first.

COPY

Ok, thank you, please leave.

The waitress gives Copy a snide look before leaving. We finally see her face, the same woman from the elevator. David stares at Copy for a moment, but does not say anything. Copy continues to look in the direction of the waitress, but soon returns to the conversation.

COPY

Alright. What's next?

DAVID

Do we know her? She seems...familiar somehow. Like I've seen her somewhere before.

COPY

What? Who cares, don't try and change the subject on me. How far are we?

DAVID

We have one line.

COPY

Right. So they know how you feel, how long have you been feeling like this?

DAVID

I don't know. Maybe forever? It feels like an eternity.

COPY

I think that's a good line to put next. They should know.

DAVID

What good will that do them?

COPY

They need to know. They need to know how long they've been ignoring you. How else will they ever really get it?

DAVID

It just feels like I'm causing them more pain than I need to.

COPY

Then let them be in pain. Their well being isn't your problem, just like they made your well being not theirs.

(stern)

Tell them.

David takes a moment to think, then starts typing.

"I don't know exactly how long I've felt like this, but it definitely feels like an eternity. "

David looks deeply at his phone, then continues writing. Copy gives him a glance, and leans back without saying anything.

"It almost feels like a game I play, just dragging out the inevitable."

David sits for a moment, his brow lightly twitching as he stares at the screen. He puts the phone down roughly, and leans back in his seat. As he leans, the waitress suddenly appears at the table, plates in tow. She places the plates down on the table as David stares, angry, at his phone. His mind is racing.

Copy accepts the plates, and arranges them on the table, glancing at David between taking plates from the waitress.

Copy shoos the waitress away after the plates have been put down, but she does not leave. She puts a lone mug of coffee in front of David. She does not walk away. It takes a moment, but David realizes the presence next to him, and looks up at her.

WAITRESS

Do you need anything else, or can I leave the check? We're trying to start closing up.

DAVID

Wait a minute...do I..-

COPY

Okay, we're all good, leave the check, goodbye thank you.

The waitress leaves. David remains confused for a moment, his eyes look unfocused, and he stares into the distance.

COPY

Hey, stay with me. You've gotta be focused or we're never getting out of here.

DAVID
(distracted)
I am
(coming back)
I am. Okay. What's next?

COPY
You know I can't give you that.
You can't just sit here and wait
for me to tell you what to write.
There's no easy way out of this,
David.

David looks at copy for a moment, and starts writing.

"There doesn't seem to be an end in sight, so I might as well just go for it, get it over with. I'm tired of waiting for some kind of easy way out. And now we're here."

COPY
Not worried about how aggressive
that might come off?

DAVID
No. You're right, it's not my
problem.

David silently takes a sip of coffee. He winces a little as he drinks it. He starts typing.

"And I know the world will keep turning, and I'll be forgotten, and life will go one for all of you. And, to me, that sounds like the kindest thing I can do for you all."

DAVID
(while typing)
You know I don't like black
coffee.

COPY
Really? Hm. Must have slipped my
mind. Could have sworn you took it
black.

DAVID
I've never taken it black. I can't
stand it.

COPY
Whatever, it's fine. Not like
you're going to have to deal with
it for much longer anyway, so you
might as well just drink it.

David gives copy a look and reaches for more coffee. He drinks it stone faced.

COPY

I feel like we're almost done here. Why don't we just wrap this up and we can be on our way.

DAVID

I actually don't know what I should put next. How are you supposed to finish something like this?

COPY

Big question, really putting me on the spot here. Maybe we put this on them. You know we never could have lived up to their expectations, their standards. There was always something they wanted you to be, and you never could quite get there.

(Beat)

Yeah, you know what? Tell them that. Rub the salt in the wound. You're not going to get another chance, so why shouldn't they know? You put up with their shit for long enough, now it's time to lay some of your own out.

DAVID

Is that what we're doing here? Rubbing salt in the wounds...?

As David questions copy, the waitress shows up again. She pours coffee into the mugs. She gives David a blank stare.

WAITRESS

(annoyed)

It's getting pretty late, are you planning on leaving? We need to close up.

DAVID

We're uh...

David freezes for a moment.

WAITRESS

Okay, well I'm just gonna start clearing these-

Copy holds his hand out after she grabs the first plate.

COPY

Okay, Miss, we'll head out in a minute, I'll let you know. Until then, please fuck off, we're in the middle of something.

The Waitress leaves with the one plate she managed to grab. She gives David a look as she walks away.

DAVID

Seriously. I swear I've seen her before.

COPY

Are you still on that? Come on, Dave. Bigger fish.

DAVID

I just feel like I know her from somewhere.

COPY

Maybe you saw her at work, maybe you saw her on the bus, but honestly Dave, who gives a shit? Let's finish up so we can get out of here.

DAVID

I still don't know how to finish this.

COPY

I thought we worked that out. We just talked about it. They need to know what they've done, so tell them.

DAVID

No, we didn't work it out. I can't just end things like that.

COPY

Humor me.

David gives a resigned sigh, and begins writing.

"I just want you all to know that I'm sorry. I'm sorry I couldn't keep it together, sorry that I couldn't live up to everything."

COPY

Perfect. See? Not so bad is it?

DAVID

I can't just leave it like that.

COPY

Why not?

DAVID

Because it doesn't sound like me. It sounds like you, and I don't want people to remember you instead of me.

COPY

Honestly, I don't think you'll have to worry about that.

David recoils at this. He sinks into his chair, pensive. Copy takes stock of the situation, leans forward.

COPY

But I guess I can humor you.

David looks up at copy, and pulls his phone out. He types.

"This isn't any of your faults. Please don't carry that guilt."

Copy gives a sharp sigh, and rolls his eyes a bit while David is looking at his phone.

COPY

Alright. Are we done now? Can we go?

DAVID

Hold on. I just want to...just sit for a second. It's not like I'm going to get another chance to do this.

COPY

Fine, fine.

Copy sits in his seat, straight up. He fidgets and adjusts noisily while David drinks some of his coffee. The two of them sit in silence for a while. Copy continuously stares at the phone.

COPY

Are...are you going to send it?

DAVID

Yeah. I will, just give me a minute.

COPY

Okay, we don't really have a minute, so why don't you just hit send and we can go do this.

DAVID

Okay. I will, I just need a minute.

THE GRINDING OF THE ELEVATOR returns, faintly. The Waitress arrives again. She begins to take the plates, none of which are empty, off the table.

WAITRESS

Okay, that's it. You two need to go. It's past closing, and believe it or not, I have better things to be doing tonight.

Copy looks at the Waitress as she continues to stack plates full of food.

COPY

Excuse me, but I'm pretty sure I told you to fuck off until we were done here. But since you can't seem to get that through your head, we'll just head out.

(to David)

Hey. Ready? Let's go.

WAITRESS

Excuse me? What the-

COPY

Hey, you hear me? SEND IT, PAY THE BILL, WE'RE OUT OF HERE.

David startles at the aggression, and starts frantically searching his pockets.

WAITRESS

Hey, are you ok?

David continues to search his pockets. Copy grabs his jacket and pulls it close. THE ELEVATOR GRIND IS DEAFENING.

COPY

WILL YOU JUST FUCKING SEND IT ALREADY? I'M SO GOD DAMN TIRED OF YOU SLOWING US DOWN LIKE THIS.

David stares at copy, eyes wide.

COPY

Fine. I'll do it.

(MORE)

COPY (CONT'D)
 Drag you fucking kicking and
 screaming.

Copy pulls David over the table, and grabs the phone from him.
 The Waitress reaches out for David, suddenly the sound stops.

WAITRESS
 Hey!

She touches his shoulder, we hear AN ELEVATOR DING and:

CUT TO:

INT. PARKING GARAGE ELEVATOR - NIGHT 9:47 PM

David stands in the elevator. His phone rings, a YOUNG WOMAN
 with a phone on her ear stands next to him, lightly shaking his
 shoulder. She is the same woman as the Waitress.

YOUNG WOMAN
 Hey, are you alright? Your phone
 is ringing.

DAVID
 What? Right, yeah. Thank you. I
 didn't even realize it.

The Young woman nods and walks off, talking into her phone.

YOUNG WOMAN
 Yeah, sorry there was just a guy
 in the elevator. Anyway it was
 just a terrible shift. Those two
 guys just wouldn't leave, even
 after all that. I practically had
 to push them out the door.
 (Pause)
 No, of course they didn't leave a
 tip, are you surprised?
 (pause)
 Yeah, I'll be home in a little
 while, sorry about this. Make sure
 you feed the cat.

David watches her leave, then snapping back to reality, picks
 his own phone up. The note is still on the screen. He taps it.
 The screen reads:

"would you like to save to drafts?"

END