

# LIMBINAL



Jack Luo

"A journey towards the ultimate realization of  
the universe, and it's manifestations"

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ISBN: WIP  
ISBN-13: WIP

This book is dedicated to all who is lost within the convoluted society today and has an insatiable desire to understand the meaning of life and the universe

This book is inspired by the world I came from, and the friends and strangers I've met along the way, and finally, the virtual worlds people have created to bravely imagine the potentials of humans in the third millenium

# Author's Note

Before you start reading the book, I think it helps to see why the book was created in the first place. You see, I am not a writer. In fact, in high school, I loathed literature analysis and was disappointed by the type of writing in school. This created the “hate” relationship in my writing. However, as I grew up in a uniquely competitive environment within California, I’d realize the world is actually a lot more nuanced and grand than I previously thought. I was living in a bubble.

Seeing all the issues in the world, and the problems my friend faced. I coped via writing: I wrote thousand word long reflections to keep me going, in the darkest of times. Despite having a “hate” relationship with writing. I realized that perhaps, writing is actually quite an enjoyable process because it allowed me to peer into and visualize other worlds.

If you read this message, I want to note that, there are so many times when this book was not

published. In every fashion and sense, I am far from writing. I have a engineering degree, I love mathematics. But somehow, at the same time, I am writing this book, which is very disconnected from any other sort of works I am doing. But I figured, this would be a great way to reimagine a new future, and experiment with a sandbox.

Writing this book was also quite an impulsive decision. I also had a very vague notion when I was young that I wanted to write some sort of story, or book when I am older. But my writing skill didn't fully develop until late high school years. Throughout the most difficult midterms and finals, I decided to start a book off an impulsive decision, originally just a very small world with two character. Slowly, the book grew larger, much larger.

(TBC)

# PART ONE

## LIMBO

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Prologue*

If I have known that entering my “new home” would chain me to my deepest hope, and embrace me with absolute certainty. Perhaps I wouldn’t have made the choice in the first place. But, I can’t change the past. So, I will live my life from anew, establish new routines,

I will pursue absolute tranquility and forget about everyone, especially her. I can create the future I want here, even if only one path lies ahead. Soon enough, the grayness of the world will engulf me, I will embrace the singularity of life and rid myself of all the evil.

Maybe I am running off to infinity, to find absolutely nothing, no one to accompany me, no goals to hit me. But that doesn’t matter, as long as I enjoy the journey, everything will be fine.

This is a new beginning.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Limbo?*

“hey.”

“Hey, can you hear me?” A voice sliced through the stillness, a phantom whisper lost in a void.

A solitary figure stood afar, a silhouette against the pure whiteness, the shoulders slacked against the body. The head facing a beam of faint light.

The silhouette took a deep breathe, and took the first step forward. The footstep echoed, the sound amplified by the nothingness.

A single drop of cold, icy blackness splashed the silhouette on the cheek, the chill spread to her chest. It’s hard to discern anything, but the face seemed to lighten a bit. “It’s rain!”, the voice barely audible above the sound of nothingness.

\* \* \*



The world seems to shrink, or perhaps the silhouette seemed diminished by the growing weight of the darkness.

More drops began to fill the world, a relentless onslaught that sought to destroy the boundary between self and surrounding. The silhouette ran faster and faster, but the rain was unforgiving, the form began to blur, melting into the darkness until there was only a shadow.

And then, there was nothing. The silhouette was amalgamated with the surrounding, the rain stopped, leaving behind a void filled with absolute nothingness.

\* \* \*

Bleary-eyes, a teenage boy rose up in his bed, he reached for his glasses on the wooden bedside table. A blurry image of the computer slowly came into view as the boy registered the low humming sounds of the computer, and the heater on the side. The boy put on his glasses.

On the left, the assortment of loosely stacked books came into focus: near the bottom lies heavy programming and ethical hacking books, a small light novel book overhang the small collection of hard science fiction. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary. He looked at the bedside table again. The alarm clock displays 08:55:23. The foundation of the clock is made out of metal, furnished with an oak exterior. The front of the clock has six seven-segment displays. A distinct tik like chime is usually produced every second, but the room is awfully quiet today: the usual chimes were missing. The low

hum of the computer slowly faded, and there was nothing. The boy hears his own heart beats speeding up.

“Dok-dok-doki-dokii”, he took a deep breath, the air filled his lung and body and calmed him down, “seems like the power is out.”

Ryohashi sheepishly dragged himself to the small window and peered outside: the sky illuminates a deep gray and gloomy undertone, and the air filled with scents of impending rain. Ryohashi saw houses fading in the distance, there was no color filling any of the houses, or Ryohashi’s room.

The whole world was covered in a black and white overtone.

“Seems to be the same, as always” Ryohashi muttered to himself quietly, grumpily grabbed a toothbrush, and looked at himself in the mirror. An average statued Japanese guy filled the reflection. Ryohashi’s thin face is filled with sparse pimples, the hair was messed up from the bed. His shirt was plain, with a small icon. There was a small mole on the right of his face.

He walked back into his room to his computer. The computer is an old windows computer that has seen its age through the scratches on the monitor. However, it was Ryohashi’s most prized possession: he did most of his work and leisure activities on the computer. Ryohashi pressed the power button on the side of the computer. The computer roared opened and 10 seconds later, the monitor displayed an old windows 10 OS fitted with the default programs. It was the

only thing in the room that has colors. The red, blue, green filled Ryohashi's eyes, the eyes returned with excitement.

Ryohashi doubled clicked on the terminal program: a black screen popped up along with the default prompt. Ryohashi typed in "sudo login". The terminal prompted for the username and password. Ryohashi typed in "ryohashi" and "979323" respectively and hit enter. Instantly, the computer spun to action, lines of text spontaneously flood the screen, loading up the linux operating system. A few seconds later, the monitor displayed a dark control panel screen with a hacker like aesthetic. The panel is fitted with DDoS Attack softwares, penetration test softwares, and IP Spoofer.

Tapping sounds emulated through the wooden floor. It sounds like footsteps, they slowly got fainter.

"What.. what was that??"

Ryohashi left his bedroom and quietly crept downstairs, he peered through the kitchen over the stair fence: the fridge was unopened, the knives were in place. He continued walking downstairs. As he approaches the front counter, an unfamiliar sight greets him: a small purse laid abreast the front counter. The front door was slightly open.

A closer inspection revealed that the purse is cat shaped. A key chain dangled of an anime girl. His mind started to race. He was always alone, always has been that way. No chit chats, no afternoon teas or movies at the theater. To Ryohashi, the only person that exists is him.

\* \* \*

"It can't be?" Ryohashi pondered for a bit. "Did someone, a girl, visit me?" Ryohashi slowly crept towards the door and turned the handle quietly. He tried to peer outside to see. The humidity overwhelmed Ryohashi as droplets of rain began to splash through the door.

Slim rays of light snuck in as a world with gray overtones fill Ryohashi's eyes. On the mud were mild imprints. It was hard discerning them, but they looked like footprints, out of place in this world.

Ryohashi took a few steps down and turned to an endless street lined with Japanese house. Their symmetry was almost unnerving in the dull light, the forms blending into one and another. The echoes of his footsteps lingered as he walked past a small playground. A house stood out from the others, it looked at a morphed fusion of two houses, an oddity in this purified world.

"Are houses supposed to look like that?" Ryohashi thought, his curiosity leading him towards the strange building.

Ryohashi slowly opened the door. The interior was covered with shadows, broken by a small lit candle in the middle of the room. Sparse furniture adorned the room, with a floor that creaks beneath its weight. Nothing particularly stuck out, except for a little door.

Once Ryohashi walked inside the little room, there was only one thing in the room, a wall of images. Ryohashi approached closer. There was an image of three people having fun on a grass field, but the faces hold no meaning to

Ryohashi. There was another one with the mystic gardens, but that didn't matter to Ryohashi. But then, an image stuck out in particular with Ryohashi.

The photo showcased a girl in mid-run, glanced back over her shoulder in a fleeting goodbye. The colors of photo begun to appear more vibrant within itself. Ryohashi felt insatiably different, a new sense of peace. One minute has passed, but it felt like an eternity.

Suddenly, Ryohashi felt a touch on his shoulder. It was a hand, slender and soft. The touch light as a feather. Ryohashi froze, his heart slowly pounding, he contemplated for a moment before facing the owner of the hand.

- Ryohashi spontaneously appeared in the new world, carrying with him memories that is based on what was computed for the world
- In this world, Ryohashi has almost no concept of what it means to be human, what it means to be born, to be loved, etc., the world is all computational, with reward system for rewarding Ryohashi for doing its job every single day.
- There is no presence of other AIs in the world, the only accessible AI is the native AI that is communicable (inner voice) directly within Ryohashi

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Ultrarealism*

A girl stood in front of Ryohashi. A simple shirt draped her torso. She is wearing jeans, with a handkerchief in one of the picket. Her hair flows naturally over her shoulders, while a headband is coiled on her wrist. There was a sweet flowery aroma surrounding her, drowning out the rusty staleness of the house.

Ryohashi clutched the pulse in both hands and shakes slightly. Who was this? He hesitated to say anything, but before a word can escape his mouse. The girl smiled. It was a smile that hinted reassurance.

“It has been sometime, Ryohashi.” The voice was faint, and the smile fainter. A small rush of familiarly hit Ryohashi, but he wasn’t sure if the girl smiled as a gesture of kindness, or as a friend.

“Who are you?” Ryohashi whispered, his hand slightly

shaking, his feet instinctively taking a step back.

The girl didn't respond. Instead, she gently reached out and took his hand. Ryohashi resisted at first, trying to pull back, but the comforting warmth of her touch stilled his movement. She guided Ryohashi with ease out of the morphed house.

The journeyed in silence through a world worn by time and neglect. An old school with its facade stripped of liveliness, and boring gray rectangular concrete buildings. A small park boring wild marks of graffiti and dried grass. The street seems to stretch towards infinity, flanked by houses taking on more and more bizarre shapes. The sidewalk begun to fracture.

"How many years has it been?" Ryohashi exclaimed. It has been way too long since he has been out walking like this. He never bothered to venture this far out, there was no point to do so. The unknown began to surround the two figures. The girl seemed unperturbed, even whistling a happy tune that warmed Ryohashi's eardrums. Everything should be fine, right?

As they walked further, the path revealed more cracks. Without warning, the world trembled violently beneath them. Houses begun to morph into bizarre configurations while the cracks widen in chase. Ryohashi watched the world, shocked.

The girl let go of Ryohashi's hand and started running away.

\* \* \*

“Wait! Come back!” Ryohashi yelled as a roof piece slipped right by the girl, scraping her hair. She narrowly avoided a fall as she caught herself before an ever endless void beneath. They found themselves on opposite ends on an ever-growing fissure.

“Dive down!” Ryohashi screamed. The girl leapt but lost grip of the timing. Ryohashi watched in horror as the girl screams out, her voice echoing into the chaos, before being swallowed by the ravine. Ryohashi rushed to the edge, trying to catch a final glimpse at her, but the cracks seemed to heal almost immediately, erasing all evidences of the chaos.

This girl was as far apart as a stranger, Ryohashi does not even know her name. But he felt an unexpected emptiness within his body. Her absence was profound, and the world didn’t pay attention to Ryohashi. He replayed the scene of the girl falling down, and the distinct smile. It was a beacon of warmth. A wave of dizziness began washing over him, he felt like his head was going to explode, but there was no pain, it was muffled.

Something felt off, streets immaculate, the cracks fully healed. Clutching the cat purse, Ryohashi started to walk back towards the familiarity of his house.

“Who was that girl? Why was she there?” A whisper permeated through the streets, lingering in the air.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Imagination*

“Hey Ryohashi, you know, you would make for a great leader in the future?” A girl was smiling at me.

I am sitting on a metal chair outside. There were two crepes rolled up nicely. One cup has a strawberry ice cream scoop with a macaron. The other has mint chocolate with a smily face drawn on it. The fragrant smell of the crepe is overshadowed by the fried chicken place next door.

“Why do you say so?” I said, munching on the ice cream on the spoon.

“Because you are born in June.” Yumi exclaimed, looking into the sky.

“But what does that have to do me being a leader?” Ryohashi inquired

\* \* \*

“Well, I can see it in you.” Yumi smiled again, seeing someone smile really helps when you have two essays due on the same day.

A group of boys walked past, they wore stiff expressions and held rich clothing. One of the boy seemed to be leader, he brushed through a girl hardly and kept walking without looking back.

“Maybe you will be right, one day.” I kept munching on the french crepe. I looked back up towards the girl, but my vision started getting blurry. The world has changed into a yellowish tone, and the contrast has increased. My head started spinning.

WHOOSH.

\*\*\* Limbo \*\*\*

Ryohashi opened his eyes, the world was spinning slightly, but he saw a swing set and slides in the playground. Nothing looked out of the ordinary.

“Was that me?” Ryohashi looked down at his hands, they looked somewhat wrinkled. There was no mirror around him, but Ryohashi was sure that his face looks also old. He used his hand to rock the swing set forward. The rustling metal made a squeaking sound in a regular interval. The fiction seem to not stop the swing from stopping.

Ryohashi layed on top of the slides, the sky was gray as always. There is nothing out of the ordinary, he thought. He sought peace in this world, but weird phenomenon kept

bothering him. Ryohashi looked over towards the end of the street.

“Maybe, maybe everything was just a dream? I might have forgot that I took a nap here”. Ryohashi tried to convince himself, without success. He started walking.

It is rare for Ryohashi to walk outside at this time of the day, but he felt a bit lost with what he wants.

“The girl that fell through the cracks earlier, it’s Yumi right?” Ryohashi tried to reimagine her face, he saw her smooth skin, and her big eyes, but nothing else. But then, the screams came, it was louder than before, Ryohashi could feel himself surrounded by the void, and seeing her body tumbling into the darkness. He lunged forward, diving into the void after her, his body weightless in the darkness. He watched the girl's body slowly disappear in the abyss, her screams echoing in the emptiness.

Ryohashi woke with a start. He was back in his house. He looked around, everything was as it was supposed to be. The alarm clock read 00:00:00. It seems that the world has been reset somehow.

Was it just a dream? He wondered. His mind was still reeling from the shock. The memory of the girl's scream still echoed in his ears. He got out of his bed and started his routine, questioning the reality he woke up in.

“Is the world fair?” Ryohashi whispered to himself. The world did not answer, instead, the world began to shift

colors slightly, the houses seem to be a bit more colorized, even if it is still gray shifted. It's an improvement.

"What did I do to get here?" Ryohashi thought back as far as he can, but all he remembers is the line of street with houses, his own room, and the playground nearby. However, one thing is not quite certain, what is the at the end of the street?

Ryohashi took a step out of the door, the weather isn't raining anymore, instead, clouds of light gray and dark gray fill the sky, with occasional dots of ivory white. He decided to walk east, where the cracks first formed. As Ryohashi walked through the main street of Limbo, he began to hear echoes of his footstep. Perhaps he has walked this path before, but has simply forgotten.

The walk became monotonous: houses continued to flow on both sides, the world screeched its grays, there was a constant, small whirring in air, it is as if the walk is another part of a job. There exist no purpose in walking, but Ryohashi continued on, towards infinity...

It is almost evening, Ryohashi's legged ached considerably, his body short of breath. He eyed the surrounding for a location to sit, but there was no where.

"It was not like it matters if I just sit on the road, no one uses it anyways." Ryohashi found a dry spot, and bent down to sit on the asphalt. He brushed his hand against the hard ground, the hand received little scrapes. He closed his eyes, and imagined that a car, maybe a Ferrari, drove on the road at over 120mph, and running him over, killing him. He

brushed his hand harder on the asphalt, the hand started bleeding, the pain receptors reacted rapidly. But Ryohashi found it soothing, maybe this is the purpose of his life.

Ryohashi decided to keep walking forward. There is no reason to do so, but there is also no reason not to. As he walked through the streets, he spotted a house that looked odd: a small yellow cottage with a flowery mailbox and a little garden. The flowers were brightly colored yellow, orange, violet, and other beautiful colors. Ryohashi hasn't seen colors this vibrant and was curious.

As he approached closer, the fumes of the house overwhelmed his tonsils. He stepped on the ledge and attempted to turn the handle of the main door before feeling a sense of nothingness in his hand. His hand trembled slightly, but he proceeded to open the door once again.

Ryohashi saw it again, the void, it looked like the insides of the ravine from the cracks. He fell as gravity pulled him further in.

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The sea filled my eyes, the ocean smelled salty and sandy, seagulls yapped in the depth of the ocean, the waves flowed onto the sand, which is littered with glamorous shells in yellow, beige, white, etc.

I tried to talk, but my mouth wouldn't open, it felt like I was watching a movie, and there was no going out of it. I tried turning around, but couldn't. The sea remained in my vision.

\* \* \*

"Look, the sun is so beautiful, the distortions on the water looks like an artwork." A female voice exclaimed, it sounded familiar. Actually, it sounded almost exactly like the mysterious girl in the crack, just younger. "I wonder what is at the end of the ocean beyond? A perfect life?"

I felt a whisper from the winds, my hoodie hat flopped up and down. I am really curious in who is talking, but I can't turn around. I squinted and saw a girl in his peripheral vision. She was wearing a white dress, flocking with the wind. A flower hair band was worn on hair glistened with sand. She is staring beyond the horizon, a distinct shining light blinded Ryohashi.

I wanted to ask her 'where are we', but no words came out. Instead, the girl kept looking away.

"Where is Kakkeda?" A cold voice jumped out. The sound resonated deep from my body. 'Was it from me?' seagulls nearby flew away, the wind suddenly slowed down. 'What is going on?'

The voice startled the girl, she stood on her footing and looked around. "Who is that... I have never heard of him?" She didn't look at me at all, rather hesitated for a moment and looked to the trees by the side.

"The plump dude with expensive clothing and talks about cryptocurrency all the time." I exclaimed. 'But it was not me.'

"Ahh, I don't know who that person is. I have no clue, what you are talking about." Yumi's body was slightly shaking

when she spoke. 'Was it because of my demeanor, or the voice?'

"Tell me about that person, NOW!" Ryohashi suddenly walks towards the girl. Yumi flinched. I desperately wanted this to stop. I pulled myself back with all of my mind power. But the body kept going without remorse.

"No, please, why??", Yumi begged, almost crying, as she attempts to back away. Yumi was closer and closer, almost within an arms reach.

Ryohashi felt a push, a very strong one before Yumi. It wasn't an ordinary push, it felt robotically powerful, Ryohashi couldn't move at all. He suddenly felt a strong surge in his body, his mind attempting to break through this fabric.

"I... I'm sorry." The voice wasn't cold, it was light, barely audible, but more peaceful. Yumi took some time to comprehend what is going on. But decided to run away.

Ryohashi reached for Yumi, but he suddenly felt lightheaded and collapsed, the last glimpse being Yumi rushing over...

There was a shrieking pain in his brain, his head was on fire, thousands of needles were stabbing his frontal cortex every second. An afterimage of Yumi is there, but one blink later, Yumi is gone. Ryohashi rubbed his eyes, the world became more clear.

"What was that? Was that, me?" Ryohashi muttered, his

finger tracing out Yumi's face with his fingers. He walked around his room, trying to find any evidence of his past. He went through the bookshelf, taking out all the books. He then went through his drawers and took out documents, scrape paper, and post notes. As Ryohashi went through the drawers, he noticed that the alarm clock reads 00003.

"000003, what does it mean?" Ryohashi began to examine the alarm clock in detail. It seems to be an ordinary alarm clock made of metal, furnished with a wood finish. On the alarm clock is 6 seven segment display, displaying the time. However, the clock seems to not work most of the time. So a change was quite perturbing.

Ryohashi decided to drag himself to the computer and sat on the squeaky office chair. The humming noise is running as normal. He robotically pressed the power button and typed in the password. The computer roared open after 10 seconds. He logged in to the terminal and the usual black screen flooded the eyes. A window popped up showing a 30% bearish on the cryptocurrency invested.

"Perhaps this is a scam after all." Ryohashi sighed, decided to not sell but wait the recession out. He decided to open up a new txt file and titled it "August 9th." He began typing.

*Today is August 9th, in the past few days, I have encountered events unlike anything. There is this girl Yumi who started to appear in this world and mind. The world is also changing uncontrollably.*

*What if, there are events in the past that have resulted in this. Who am I?*



\* \* \*

Ryohashi saved the txt file into the folder "Back up". The folder contains many text files, most of them are titled with dates, but some are untitled. The date modified looks to be a few yeras ago.

"I think this much would do." Ryohashi wrote a script to concatenate all the files into one, then split the tokens for training.

"I hope my knowledge of school doesn't go to waste." Ryohashi proclaimed sarcastically.

Ryohashi began programming the neural network, taking the time to draw it out on paper.

"I probably want someone who has a calm demeanor." Ryohashi tuned the emotional module to not exceed 0.3.

"By creating multiple modules of neural networks, following the structure of the brain, I think this could be it" Ryohashi continued typing away, the clicks sounds echoed lightly in the room.

Ryohashi's head began to bob left and right, and then fell asleep.

(To be continued)