

POLARIS

"Pilot"

Written by

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TEASER

INT. THE MALL - END OF THE MALL - NIGHT

At first, all we see is black. We hear heavy, frightened breathing. Now we see the source:

ON MOLLY STILLMAN

She is a 16-year-old girl of mixed race. She is pretty, dressed like she should be at a party with people her age. She lies, propped against a metal beam, looking in horror at something past the camera.

DANIEL

(O.S.)

Molly.

A beat.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(O.S.)

Molly!

We cut back to see the situation in full. Molly is at the end of a big indoor mall. There are three stories. The second and third floors end in balconies that overlook at great atrium. There is barely any light, and all is silent. The mall ends in giant windows, which are kept ten feet from the people by a waste-high wall. Between the windows and the wall there is a sort of trench, so people standing at the wall get the effect of standing on a balcony. Outside, we see tall buildings with no lights on. We can't see the ground; the mall very high up. The architecture suggests this takes place in the future.

Molly has fallen over the wall into the trench. The metal beam behind her is a part of the window frame, effectively trapping her in a section of the trench. Above her there is a broken statue and scaffolding around it. It seems to have fallen and bashed against the window. Heavy looking pieces of the statue lie in a pile in front of Molly, where she is staring.

Above her, leaning over the rail, is DANIEL STILLMAN. He is white, mid-fifties, grizzled and tough looking. He tries to reach down to her.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Molly, I need you to take my hand.

MOLLY
You killed him.

We see now what she's been staring at. The arm and head of a man can be seen, pinned under the broken statue. We can't make out any details in the darkness. The man was reaching for her, inches away from her foot.

DANIEL
Yes, Honey, I'm sorry. I didn't have a choice.

Daniel looks at the window.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW, LOOKING IN

We see Daniel, and a crack where the statue probably hit. The crack expands slowly in a circular pattern, as if the window were being pressed by some unseen force. Seeing the expansion makes Daniel more hurried.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
But right now I need you to take my hand. Come on, Molly, right now!

BACK INSIDE

MOLLY
I--I don't--

DANIEL
(turning away)
Po! The damn panel!

Daniel is calling to WENDY PO, who can't be seen yet.

WENDY PO (O.S.)
(also hurried)
I working on it!

DANIEL
(turning back to Molly)
Molly, please, take my hand now!

Molly finally snaps out of her shock a bit, and reaches up to take Daniel's hand. Her grips her tightly.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Okay, good. Now I need you to-

The window SUDDENLY BURSTS OUTWARD, and wind rushes out through the hole with such force that it lifts Molly into the air. Daniel barely holds onto her. Molly screams.

EXT. - THE MALL

We see Molly and the hole. We pull back, and we can now see this isn't a regular city at night, it's a city in space. Molly is being pulled by the vacuum--

SMASH TO BLACK

ACT I

EXT. SPACE

We see only the stars for a few moments, and then a soothing, deep voice speaks:

SAMUEL WATERS (V.O.)
Earth.

We pan down to see the planet Earth beneath us.

SAMUEL WATERS (V.O.)
Humanity's birthplace, and our
home. But we failed our home.

The Earth slowly takes on a more muddy brown color.

SAMUEL WATERS (V.O.)
Over generations of ignorance,
pollution, and consumption, we
poisoned our world so thoroughly
that many believed it could no
longer sustain us. And so we built
an ark, and filled it with a
hundred-million people.

A giant space ship flies up from the planet, and past the camera.

Fade to:

SPACE

The ship is seen close up, slowly drifting past the camera. We pan to see its destination: a green/brown planet with less blue on the surface than Earth.

SAMUEL WATERS (V.O.)
The largest vessel in history set
out on the longest voyage,
traveling through the stars until
it reached a world where we could
try again. But when the people woke
from their stasis and set foot on
New Earth, they did not plant the
seeds of a garden of Eden, but a
new Hell.

EXT. NEW EARTH - DESERT TOWN - DAY

A CROWD gathers around a truck. We see a large spaceship in the background, grounded. The ship and the truck are clearly products of advanced technology, but like the people they are run down and dirty.

MEN IN UNIFORMS pass out sacks of food from the truck, but the people are desperate, and start fighting. Two different ethnic groups seem to be particularly at each others' throats.

SAMUEL WATERS (V.O.)
 Limited resources and harsh
 conditions saw humanity divided
 among sectarian and ethnic lines
 once again.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - NIGHT

Jerry-rigged vehicles serve as tanks, and MEN WITH GUNS advance along side the vehicles toward a similar line of enemies, exchanging bullets and a few lasers beams.

EXT. MASS GRAVE - NIGHT

Another body is pushed by an unseen person into the grave, so packed it's impossible to tell how many people have been killed. Some are in uniform, others are not.

SAMUEL WATERS (V.O.)
 Wars were fought, and atrocities
 committed.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

There is smoke, wreckage and death everywhere. The armies have moved on, leaving the battlefield empty.

SAMUEL WATERS (V.O.)
 It was in this horrible repetition
 of humanity's dark past that a few
 grasped the simple truth: that no
 matter where we go, we take the
 traits that ruined two worlds with
 us. A second exodus was needed: and
 this time from humanity itself.

TOWN GATHERING - DAY

A crowd is gathered around a man standing on a wall, like the sermon on the mount. This is the first scene that looks like archive footage: someone in the town filmed this from the crowd. The man speaking passionately is SAMUEL WATERS, though we don't know that yet. He is a tall man of Native American descent.

SAMUEL WATERS (V.O.)

The founders gathered up all those who wanted nothing to do with the divisions of New Earth, and built a place where they could be safe.

ABOVE NEW EARTH

In a similar shot to the exodus from Earth, several small ships fly up from New Earth. This time we follow them, and see:

EXT. POLARIS - NIGHT

Polaris is an urban utopia in space. It's the size of New York, with a million people living in it. The city is a giant disk covered in towering buildings. The center of the disk is hollow. Floating in the center is a spire, bigger than the other towers by far, not connected by any visible means to the rest. There is no bubble of air surrounding the city; the buildings are surrounded by vacuum. Nothing here was built in a hurry. Everything is top-notch, polished and shining.

We fly around the city, seeing it in all its splendor. There are:

BIODOMES with lush vegetation unlike anything on New Earth.

MASSIVE INDOOR SPACES, similar to the mall, but larger, with museums and schools and throngs of people.

HIGHWAYS built between the buildings in clear tubes so that the thousands of people driving futuristic cars can see their city.

And of course:

LOTS OF TOWERS. There is barely an open spot anywhere, save for the space between the great circle and the central spire.

SAMUEL WATERS (V.O.)

A city in the sky called Polaris.
 A city without territories that
 would divide "us" from "them";
 without religions that would fuel
 argument and superstition; without
 cultures that would promote
 tradition over justice.
 This city, our city, is a shining
 beacon of reason, peace, and
 prosperity.

INT. THE GRAND HALL - POLARIS - NIGHT

The Grand Hall is where politicians make big speeches to big crowds on big days. Today is the biggest day of them all. We see Samuel Waters speaking from a much higher platform to a much larger crowd than when he was on New Earth. He is wearing a suit, and surrounded by fellow civil servants, like a president at his inauguration.

SAMUEL WATERS

Today, on the eve of its fifteenth anniversary, we look back on all the years since our ascension with pride, and forward to the many more to come with hope, and the promise of a better life. Please join me in raising a cheer for our great city: to Polaris!

The crowd cheers wildly.

EXT. LARGE RESTAURANT

The restaurant is on the inner edge of the disk of the city, looking at the center spire. We see the people inside standing and cheering as well. We pan to the side, seeing another, smaller establishment on the edge. It is rather isolated compared to most other places, a small light on a dark wall. We focus on it a moment, before cutting to:

INT. THE EDGE BAR

The bar has a large window looking out at the spire. On the other end is the entrance. The patrons of the bar are cheering like everyone else in Polaris. On the big screens around the room, we see Samuel being adored. The captions on the screens read:

"Councilman Samuel Waters speaks on Founding Day"

We see several groups. One is a group of people in business suits: JOHN WALLER, JACK MYERS, YURI KASPAROV, and MALAK FARS. They are loud and boisterous, challenging each other to more rounds of alcohol. They're mostly about 30 years old. Yuri is 45.

At another table sit FEN PO and Wendy Po. They are a lesbian married couple, just content to watch the screens and stare out the window, holding each other. Fen has Chinese ancestry, and is about seventy years old. Wendy is Caucasian, and in her early forties.

Another couple are by themselves: ISABELLA SMITH and DON SMITH. They are a well-to-do couple, a little overdressed for the Edge Bar, but having a pleasant time.

A pair of single ladies are at the bar: ADITI GAHNDI and LINDA GOLOVKIN. They are happily trying out new drinks.

Several of the drinks are glowing various colors.

We see the center spire out the window and a screen hanging in view as the celebrations continue. We pull back to see a man sitting at the bar. It's Daniel, the one person not cheering. He lifts his glass in fake celebration.

DANIEL

Hurray.

The bartender, BOB DAWSON, stands ready to refill Daniel's glass. Bob is an endlessly cheery guy, even when dealing with people who refuse to smile, like Daniel.

BOB

You know Dan, you're probably the only person in the whole city who isn't celebrating right now.

DANIEL

I strive for variety.

Daniel finishes his drink, and Bob refills.

BOB

Said the man who's drunk the same Tennessee whiskey every night for the past six years. You know, I think you actually get more not-happy on Founding Day. Cheer up! Didn't you hear the neat history speech thing about how we're living in a shiny space paradise?

DANIEL

What can I say, Bob? Maybe not everyone belongs in paradise.

A female NEWS ANCHOR is on the screens, happily telling us more about the awesome day. By her head, a countdown appears: one hour till midnight. The patrons of the bar cheer again. Seeing the countdown, Daniel reaches into his pocket and takes out a gold pocket watch. It's a beautifully crafted antique. It's ticking away, showing the correct time.

BOB

Damn. That's a nice one. Somebody commission this?

Dan lets Bob hold the watch.

DANIEL

It's for a uh, old friend.

As Daniel says "old friend", we see Samuel Waters on the screen behind him. We don't know it yet, but Samuel and Daniel go way back.

BOB

Piece of art. How's business this year?

DANIEL

About breaking even. Not many people interested in replica antiques in a place that flushed the past. Just want the latest in annoying gadgetry.

Daniel's hand flashes and rings like a cell phone. He has a device inside his palm.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Speaking of which.

Daniel opens his hand, and looks at his palm. A holographic screen is projected by the phone in his hand, displaying caller ID. It reads "Molly Stillman", with her picture on the side.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(to Bob)

Excuse me.

Daniel puts his hand on the apparently wood counter, and a second later the counter itself displays the screen from Daniel's hand phone.