

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Short, Drama

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1. INT. ETHAN'S PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - MORNING

The rhythmic hum of a rowing machine fills the sleek, modern penthouse. ETHAN, early 30s, pushes through his workout, sweat glistening on his skin. Through the panoramic window, the city skyline awakens under the morning light.

The music from his headphones pulses, barely audible over the machine's whir. A muted TV flickers in the background, adding to the room's ambient noise. Ethan's face remains obscured, his focus unwavering.

The rowing machine's TIMER beeps. Ethan gradually slows, hooks the handles back, and breathes deeply. He wipes his face with a towel, still keeping his face hidden. He glances at his smartwatch, checking the time.

Ethan stands, stretches, and leaves the machine behind. The workout is over, but the day's challenges are just beginning.

2. INT. ETHAN'S PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - WALK-IN WARDROBE - MORNING

Ethan, fresh from the shower, checks his watch again. He walks across his bedroom, the robe slipping to the floor as he steps into his walk-in wardrobe. His movements are precise, yet his face remains unseen.

He runs his fingers along the shirts, feeling the fabric before selecting a crisp, tailored suit. He dresses with practiced efficiency, his every move deliberate.

A moment of hesitation as he approaches a large wardrobe. Opening it reveals a collection of masks, each representing a role he has played.

Ethan's hand hovers over a drawer labeled "WORK". He pulls it open, revealing an array of masks, each corresponding to a different aspect of his professional life. Voiceovers echo faintly as he handles them:

THE NEGOTIATOR

Ethan, just push a little harder.  
They're almost biting. You've got  
this!"

THE PEACEMAKER

Ethan, thank goodness you're here.  
Could you help mediate? You always  
know how to smooth things over.

THE ENTHUSIAST

I need that Ethan energy today!  
Give me that big smile and positive  
vibe.

## THE STOIC

Your calm demeanor is keeping me on board. You're the rock here.

## THE INNOVATOR

His ideas might be the future. But can he play by the rules?

He pauses over a small, dusty box tucked away in the corner. Intrigued, Ethan pulls it out. The box creaks open, revealing a fractured mask. As he touches the shards, voices echo:

## VOICE 1 (BERATING)

What value does being different bring?

## VOICE 2 (CONDESCENDING)

Why can't you just fit in?

## VOICE 3 (DISMISSIVE)

What's so special about being different?

## VOICE 4 (DEMANDING)

Why should we change for you?

## VOICE 5 (WISTFUL)

I wish you'd just be more like us.

The weight of these words hangs in the air. Ethan's hand trembles as he handles the broken pieces, symbolizing his fragmented identity.

Suddenly, frustration overwhelms him. He punches the wall beside the wardrobe, leaving a dent. His bruised hand shakes as he leans against the wall, breathing heavily.

## ETHAN (SOFTLY, TO HIMSELF)

Being different... is who I am.  
It's not about fitting into the world... but finding a way for the world to fit us all.

His hand lingers over a plain, nondescript mask. He takes it, holding it for a moment as if weighing its significance. He then closes the wardrobe, standing in silence before the day begins.

## 3. INT. ETHAN'S PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

Ethan sits at a minimalist dining table, eating breakfast. The mask he selected earlier lies on the countertop, its presence almost accusatory.

MASK (VOICEOVER)

Big day today, Ethan. Ready to play the part? Remember, they need to see what they expect, not who you really are.

Ethan pauses, fork mid-air, the voice unsettling yet familiar. He resumes eating, but each bite feels heavier.

MASK (VOICEOVER)

Being yourself only invites questions, confusion... It's easier to blend in, to wear me and just get through the day.

Ethan finishes his breakfast, checking the time. The voice of the mask echoes in his mind, but he knows time is slipping away.

MASK (VOICEOVER)

Almost time, Ethan. They're waiting. Without me, who are you to them?

Ethan stands, takes the mask, and exits the kitchen. The now silent room emphasizes the solitude and inner conflict he faces every day.

#### 4. EXT. CITY STREET - MORNING

Ethan steps into the bustling city, blending with the crowd. He pauses beside a bin, holding the mask in his hand. The mask's voice wavers, unsure.

MASK (VOICEOVER, CONFUSED AND SLIGHTLY PANICKED)

Ethan, what are you doing?

For the first time, Ethan's face is revealed, a mix of determination and serenity. He addresses the camera, breaking the fourth wall.

ETHAN

Sometimes, the masks need to be put aside, so we can shine through. After all, you are your only limit.

He drops the mask into the bin. The sound of it hitting the bottom is final. Ethan turns and walks away, each step a move towards authenticity.

The camera pulls back, watching Ethan merge with the crowd, no longer just another masked figure but a man embracing his true self.

The last shot lingers on the mask lying in the bin, as Ethan disappears into the distance.

FADE TO BLACK