

MASK

written by

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FADE IN

INT. COSTUME STORE - DAY

THE MASK sits before us. Deep black, humanoid, a male face, but made out of ribbons, as if constructed by wrapping black electrical tape around itself in a complex fashion.

Uneven, the tape lines crisscrossing in no clear pattern. The edges of the mask ragged, trailing like tendrils, to give it an untidy, raw appearance, a sense of unfinishedness.

As if the mask expects a body to appear below it, a face to appear inside.

But it's empty now, stretched over a blank white mannequin head. Staring into us with its blank, blank eyeholes, the blackness filled by a bright clean white.

Overall, the mask is not especially frightening - not a jagged, toothy nightmare. Subdued, a bit abstracted, somewhat iconic.

STOREKEEPER (O.S.)

You belong in this mask.

The voice startles THOMAS, who we haven't yet seen, but who stands fixated by the mask.

Wider, the mask seems less impressive, just another mask in this corner of the costume store.

THOMAS

Is it from a movie or something?

STOREKEEPER

No, it's just a mask, but it has that feel, doesn't it?

THOMAS

Seems like I've seen it somewhere.

STOREKEEPER

Maybe, I've sold a few. It's not popular. But it's my favourite.

The storekeeper lifts the mask off the mannequin head to display it to Thomas.

STOREKEEPER

The mask draws attention so makes for a striking costume. Doesn't matter what you wear with it.

Thomas is considering the mask this whole time, fascinated by it. Then the shopkeeper offers Thomas the mask.

Thomas moves to take it, as if by instinct, but then HIS PHONE BEEPS. The spell breaks. Thomas takes up his phone instead.

THOMAS
 (texting something back)
 Uh, sorry, I'm running late --
 (puts the phone away)
 -- I'll just take something more
 classic, maybe Michael Myers?

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

EVIL SYNTH-POP blares as Thomas stumbles out of the main area of a house party and into a long hallway, looking for the bathroom.

He's wearing not a Michael Myers mask like we'd expect, but a Phantom of the Opera mask, some makeup for fake scarring on the rest of his face. Face half-visible, makeup amateurish. Clearly Thomas.

The song is "VILLAINS" by Kindest Cuts (or something similar) and blares as Thomas drunkenly stumbles through the dark:

MUSIC (O.S.)
*Tell me a story
 The kind that children read
 Ones where the heroes win
 Are not to be believed...*

Thomas is very drunk. Hitting the walls and bumping back.

THOMAS
 (to the wall)
 Sorry.

He catches himself apologizing to the wall.

THOMAS
 (shaking head, laughing
 at himself)
 "Sorry." L, O, L.

THOMAS bumbles down the hallway. The lights are out so the light is behind him, where he left the party.

THOMAS
 (to himself)
 L, O, L, as the kids say...

Everything dimmer and dimmer as he proceeds.

The music drones down, quieter and quieter. As he heads deeper and deeper down the hallway.

The too-long hallway. It's too dark and too long. It shouldn't be this dark. It shouldn't be this long.

He starts to sober up a bit, starts to feel unnerved.

THOMAS

Where the fuck is the bathroom?

It's quiet now. He can't hear the party anymore. How far has he gone? Where does this hallway lead?

He's more sober now. He stops. Turns around. Turns again.

Turns one more time.

Now he's lost --

INT. INSIDE THE DARKNESS

Thomas has lost his bearings, lost himself inside of an impossibly long, impossibly dark hall.

He starts to panic. Breathing heavy and fast.

THOMAS

Hello?

His voice carries. A soft but audible echo.

THOMAS

Hey!

He picks a path. Starts to crash down it.

Panicking. Stumbling.

Running.

Running.

Thomas can't see anything as he runs.

Smashes into the walls. Again. And again.

But gets nowhere. Sees nothing.

Then --

A DOOR CRASHES OPEN -- in the distance, in the darkness --

White light pours out of the door, a white rectangle of light in the distant dark.

Thomas sighs, relieved. Rushes towards the light.

Then a figure steps into the light.

A MASKED MAN, tall, wearing -- of course -- the mask of black electrical tape.

Thomas stops.

The Masked Man stands to stare at Thomas, backlit so that we cannot see much of him. But we can see that it's the same mask.

Thomas stares at the Masked Man. The Masked Man stares back.

Then steps away, retreating back into the light.

He's gone.

Thomas is alone in the hallway, in the darkness.

In the distance, that light. The door still open.

Tentatively, Thomas makes his way toward the light.

As he draws nearer, the music returns. THE SAME SONG. As if he had only been gone for a moment.

Thomas moves out of the darkness, moves toward the light.

INT. PARTY - NIGHT

Everything's normal. The Masked Man nowhere to be seen. Just the music and the atmosphere of a normal house party.

Thomas a bit confused, discombobulated -- he's so off-kilter that he's startled when SARAH laughs into proximity.

SARAH

There you are!

Thomas jumps back, terrified.

But it's just Sarah. She's dressed up like a sexy Dracula.

Sarah gives Thomas a weird look, laughs at him. Fake-lunges like she's going to bite.

Thomas settles. It's just Sarah.

INT. THOMAS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Thomas and Sarah stumble into his apartment, laughing. She's drunk, he's drunk, they're touchy-feely and having fun.

SARAH
Phantom is so dumb!

THOMAS
They were sold out of
Michael Myers.

SARAH
Who?

Thomas waves her away, a "never mind" wave.

THOMAS
You want something else to drink?

SARAH
I want to get nude!

Thomas laughs. Sounds good to him.

THOMAS
Let me wash my face off first.

Sarah laughs away toward the bedroom and Thomas stumbles to the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Thomas runs the water. Tests it till it runs hot. Swaying a bit. Drunker than before. He loops off the Phantom mask.

Lathers up his hands in the steaming water, washes his face. Washing and rinsing the makeup.

Towels off, rubbing off the last of the makeup.

Shakes his head. Drunk. Inspects his face to make sure all the makeup is gone.

That's when he sees the cracks.

There are cracks in his face. Jagged black lines. Like a professional makeup job under his amateurish one.

He rubs at them with the towel, but they don't rub off. In fact, the crack that he rubs widens.

Thomas drops the towel, moves his fingers to the cracks in his face. Leans closer to the mirror, to get a better look.

The cracks are real.

Thomas touches them tentatively and his skin parts a little. He pushes his fingers in a bit, exploring.

Then spreads his fingers. The cracks widen with his fingers.

He makes a decision and pulls. The skin starts to strip away.

Pulls and pulls. His face ripping apart in strips.

Underneath, of course, is the mask, a black mass dark under his skin.

Thomas peels and peels --

Peeling away his face --

Leaving only the mask.

He straightens. Stands before the mirror. Tall. Taller now?

Thomas has become the Masked Man that he saw in the hallway, in the darkness, in the doorway.

Thomas/The Masked Man considers himself in the mirror.

Then the bathroom door opens and Sarah skips through.

SARAH

(as she enters)

Maybe I'll leave Sexy Dracula on?

She stops cold as she sees the Masked Man.

She opens her mouth in shock, about to scream --

But before she can scream, just as her mouth opens --

CRASH TO BLACK